This newsletter has contact details removed. Please use the website contact.

Association of Shrewsbury Railway Modellers

February 2021 Newsletter

Welcome to the February newsletter. Once again we have articles on a varied selection of topics, and our thanks, as always, go out to those who have taken the trouble to keep this community endeavour going so successfully. Editing is an 'interesting' job, and I find myself torn between the desire to develop a coherent style and flow throughout an edition, while at the same time wishing to give free rein to the individual ways in which you present your articles. This is further complicated by my inexperience in altering layout, font, font size, etc., and by trying to ensure that the final shrinking necessary to keep the overall Mb count below the email threshold does not reduce the newsletter to a jumbled mess. Managing photographs can be particularly hair-raising, and my 'undo' button has become well worn, as has my stock of Anglo-Saxon expletives! In the case of such painstakingly set out articles as Dave's and Gordon's this month I have just not dared touch them at all. There is though at least some coherence in style, I hope; and I hope too that you, the contributors, do not feel that I have mangled your efforts too badly.

From being, apparently, the slowest in the country to vaccinate, Shropshire has now sprung into action. June and I will have had our first injection at the Telford International centre by the time you receive this, and I hope before long many of us will be in the same encouraging position. Meeting in person is therefore thankfully one step closer, though it will still be some time before we can safely restart. However, in the meantime we have our

Next Zoom Meeting - Wednesday, February 3rd

Gordon Woods will talk on **"Travels with my Dad - a photographic railway journey" ;** and Stephen Duffell on **"Rails in the outback – an unlikely survivor – The Croydon and Normanton Railway"**

The meeting will begin at about 7.15pm and you are encouraged to join at 7pm so we can have a prompt start. Just click on this link and it will take you into the meeting:

We hope as many members as possible will join the meeting: the last one was well attended with seventeen of us taking part.

Gordon Woods will be editing next month's newsletter, so please send any items to him for inclusion by 23rd February at

I have included another quiz this month for you to get your teeth into, courtesy of Scotrail and Dave Gotliffe. No prizes this time – it is just for fun – answers next month.

Peter Cox

Contents

Minutes of the January Meeting.

The 6th January meeting was another well attended 'virtual' affair on Zoom.

David Gotliffe entertained us all with his unusually titled chat called "Leftovers, Mache and Green Stuff'. I won't explain the title… but provide a brief resume of the content!

David talked us through his small scale scenic model in Z Gauge of a small terminus in Switzerland called Uetliberg which is near Zurich. If any of us had previously pondered the complexity of dual gauge track layouts, David blew our minds with photos of the enormous track layout at Zurich (surface and sub surface) and then threw in a quick mention of 'Dual Voltage, Offset and Central Overhead Catenary' Wires. Just read that again …. The Pantographs can be moved from one position to another and then receive different voltages to their motors. Tidy, beautiful and well designed is what we were shown in the pictures, both of the real Swiss Railways and of course David's modelling. Wonderfully executed with drawings first and then finely cut out to realise a 3D representation.

David then went onto to talk about how he formed the landscape with 'Art Mache' which is a commercially available ready made paper mache product. If offers (quite cheaply) some advantages over home made paper mache, not least in it's consistency and effort involved. Covering it up became the subject of rather natty demonstration of Static Grassing using some of the Green Scene range of products. I have one but have only used it very briefly so far.

Our next Zoom will be Wed 3rd Feb…. we look forward to seeing you all….

Scott Stephenson

As David has now kindly provided more information on some of the items that he mentioned in his very helpful talk, this is the appropriate place to include his follow-up article:-

More on Green Stuff

Modelling materials from Spain – including textured rolling pins!

David Gotliffe

During my short presentation on 6th January 2021 I made reference to offset curved paving slabs and other unusual embossed plastic sheets supplied by Green Stuff World of Alicante, Spain.

I was introduced to Green Stuff World by my son, Simon, who is a talented model-maker and accomplished airbrush painter. Although Green Stuff World specialises in military, fantasy and Warhammer models, it also supplies a vast range of general model-making tools and materials, some of which is unobtainable from other sources. An extract from their website is shown at the end of this article, showing a selection of items that may be of interest to ASRM members.

“Green Stuff” is actually a high-quality two-part epoxy putty supplied in tape form which, when mixed, has a working time of about 90 minutes. (GSW also supplies “Brown Stuff”, which is similar to Green Stuff but slightly elastic when set.) Among many other uses, both types make an excellent large-gap filler and base material, which can be scribed and sculpted before setting, and which will set to form a very strong surface.

Green Stuff, supplied in various tape sizes and other formats

Simon has recently acquired a fresh supply of Green Stuff in order to create textured bases for a selection of dioramas he is currently working on. The texture will be created using another Green Stuff product – a textured rolling pin. These are available in a wide range of patterns, and while some are designed for Fantasy modellers (“Alien Hive”, “Vampire”, etc.) there is also a wide selection of conventional brick, stone and paving designs.

Textured rolling pins; a selection from the large range of available patterns

The rolling pins are simply rolled over putty (or similar material) to create the embossed surface. The stills below, from a GSW video on YouTube, demonstrate the technique, applied to Green Stuff.

The rolling pins have a number of advantages over embossed plastic sheets: the depth of the pattern can be adjusted by using different levels of pressure; with heavy pressure they are capable of producing deep, well-defined patterns; and they are effective on uneven or contoured surfaces. On the other hand, it takes a bit of practice to get the technique right and, if the surface to be embossed is greater than the width of the pin, it is difficult to get the continuity of the pattern right – it's a bit like trying to match adjoining sheets of wallpaper. But for some applications, the rolling pins seem to work well.

Green Stuff works out at around £5 - £10 per pack (depending on size), and the rolling pins are about £10 each. Delivery from GSW is reasonably fast; Simon and I have been buying them for a number of years, and most orders arrive within about 2 weeks.

The photos below show Simon's first test piece, using a design called "Frozen", which is intended to simulate cracked ice, but also resembles cracked stone paving.

GSW Textured Rolling Pin – "Frozen"

Simon Gotliffe's first test piece; a layer of "Green Stuff" mounted on a spare oval plinth, embossed with the Frozen textured rolling pin. The technique has worked well on the contoured base, except that insufficient pressure has been applied at the centre, resulting in a loss of depth of the texture.

An extract from the Green Stuff World website, showing a selection of the modelling tools and accessories available.

GREEN STUFF WORLD

www.greenstuffworld.com

SCULPTING TOOLS
- Sculpting Brushes
- Sculpting Tools
- Micro Balls

TEXTURED ROLLING PINS
- Textured Rolling Pins
  - 12-15-20 mm (HO-N)
  - 25-28 mm (0-0n30)
  - 32-35-45 mm (G)
  - 70-75 mm (1/22-1/24)
  - All
- Mega Rolls
- Rolling Pin Deals
- Rolling Pin Display

CUTTING TOOLS
- Cutting Tools
- Punches
- Cutting Mats

TEXTURING TOOLS
- Roll Maker
- Corrugator
- Textures Plates
  - Chainmail
  - Other Textures
- Tile Plunger Cutter

WORKING TOOLS
- Working Tools
- Sculpting Holders
  - Sculpting Holders
  - Pinning Rods

SHOP DISPLAYS
- Metal
- Methacrylate

EPOXY PUTTIES
- Green Stuff
- Brown Stuff
- Milliput
- Procreate
- Magic Sculpt

POLYMER CLAY
- Super Sculpey
  - 454 gr
  - 55 gr
- Fimo
  - 454 gr Professional
  - 57 gr

MOLD MAKING
- Reusable BLUE STUFF
- Sculptor Vaseline
- Silicone
- Plasteline - Modelling Clay
- Blu Tack
- Molds
  - Containment Moulds
  - Silicone Moulds
- Resins
  - Acrylic resin
  - UV Resin

ABS PLASTICARD
- Profiles and Rods
  - Squared profiles
  - Flat Profiles
  - Round Profiles
  - Hexagonal Profiles
  - Fluorescent profiles
  - Other Profiles
  - Variety Packs
- Plain Sheets
- Textured Sheets
- Water Sheets
- Pipe Elbows

OTHER MATERIALS
- Sculpting Armatures
- Cork
- Foams
  - Foamed PVC
  - Foamboard
- Formable Metals
  - Rubber Steel
  - Tin
  - Brass

BASES
- MDF Bases
  - Round
  - Square
  - Oval
  - Hexagonal
  - Movement Trays
- Plastic Bases
  - Round
  - Square
  - Oval
- Acrylic Bases
  - Oval
  - Round
  - Hexagonal
  - Flying Stem

DISPLAY PLINTHS
- Bust Plinths
- Round and Oval Plinths
- Squared Plinths
- Hollow plinths

INSTANT GLUE
- Instant glue
- Glue tips

RARE MAGNETS
- Neodymium Magnets (N35)
- Neodymium Magnets (N52)
- Magnetic Sheets
- Rotation Magnets (N52)

LIGHTING PRODUCTS
- LED lights
- Street lights
- Photography

MERCHANDISING
- T-shirts
- Stickers
- Others

STEAMPUNK AND BEADS
- Beads and Mechanisms
- Goggles and Lenses
- PocketWatches
- Buttons
- Steampunk Jewelry

WATERSLIDE DECALS
- Waterslide Decals

GAMING TOKENS
- Gaming Tokens
- Resin Token Stickers

TRANSPORT CASES
- For Paints
- For Miniatures

RESIN ITEMS
- Resin
  - Skulls
  - Ruins
  - Tree Stumps
  - Other modern
  - Other fantasy
- Transparent resin
- Resin plates - Crunch Times!

BASING MATERIALS
- Hobby Sand
- Grass Tufts
- Static Grass
  - 3 mm
  - 6 mm
  - 12 mm
- Shrubs Tufts
- Clump Foliage
- Islandmoss
- Paper Plants
- Scatter Foliage
- Model Leaves

MODEL SNOW
- Model Snow
- Realistic Model Snow

OTHER SCENERY
- Model Trees and Bushes
- Model Bricks
- Sandbags
- Hobby Chain
- Letters and Numbers
- Barbed wire
- Gravestones
- Micro Runes
- Screws and Nuts
- Cogs and gears
- Photo-etched Plates

LASER CUT SCENERY
- Methacrylate
- MDF wood
- Paper

TERRAIN
- Neopren Terrain
- 3D Scenery

EARL'S HALL – progress with the [missing] link

At last, 7 years since finalising the plans for the layout it now sports a name, a name that has fond memories for us both – I say no more.

I am sure I am not alone in taking months and months running into years planning and re-planning and never quite happy with the track plan. But I recall with great satisfaction the eureka moment 7 years ago when it all came together sitting outside in the sun overlooking a Norwegian fjord on the best caravan pitch on the site, which, finding we were British, was earmarked for us in preference to the multitude of Germans in their camper vans – confirmation, if confirmation were needed that there remains a level of antipathy between these peoples.

At the time of the January Newsletter the three boards forming the link had been constructed but were awaiting the fixing of the running surfaces together with copper clad at the board joints; but especially needed was some form of alignment, as each board would need to be removed to wire up, if only because soldering upside down has been found to be injurious to the epidermis.

As these new boards had to fit snugly between existing fixed boards there would be no wriggle room to employ joiners' dowels. The solution was to utilise aluminium tubes of 8mm and 10mm OD, the former providing an interference fit within the latter. Photo 1 shows the arrangement with the 10mm sleeves firmly fixed to each board using Milliput which was applied keeping the 8mm tube in place to ensure the 10mm sleeves remained aligned. Such is the accuracy upon completion that I have found it can be beneficial to apply a smear of silicon grease and also to grind a chamfer on the ends of the inner tubes to assist location. It would have been better to spread the two sets of tubes further apart than could be managed and the difficulty of access is also the reason why one set of tubes is not horizontal –whilst it does not look very good, it does at least work.

Photo 2 depicts the end of the tracks now needing to be joined to the link baseboards. The three tracks to be continued from the main layout were previously terminated by soldering to copper clad but one of these had suffered in the house move with a section of track lifted, together with the metal base on which it was laid. The gradient being 1 in 45, I had been concerned that some locos might struggle and the solution appeared to me at the time to lay the track on metal plates and insert a magnet within any struggling loco, a system by DCC Concepts and marketed under the name “Power Base”. This would provide additional adhesion reminiscent of Hornby's “magnadhesion” system. However I have since successfully run a class 60 up the slope with 22 PGA wagons each loaded with real ballast and have had no problem even at slow speed. Just what the real class 60 was meant to achieve I suppose.

With the other two tracks firmly in place and ballasted I felt a reluctance to do anything except leave them in place and carefully butt up the new track soldering to exact line and level. Would it not be nice to declare that this operation went smoothly? But no, with the precision that N gauge demands it was found the base needed to be lifted slightly, 1mm card proving too much and 0.5mm too little. In the end 2 pieces of 80gsm paper were glued to a 0.5mm card and bingo. This operation was not helped by the fact that I had to stand on a hop-up and reach over to the rear of the baseboard which distance was exactly in between two of the focal lengths of my [old] varifocal glasses. Why use old glasses? Simply because my new ones finished up in the middle of the road when I slipped on ice and were promptly run over - the cost of replacing being not dissimilar to that of a new locomotive!

On 16 January I took delivery of two new class 92 sound-fitted locomotives made for RevolutioN Trains by Rapido. I had ordered these on 24 October 2016 and prepaid in three instalments. It is perhaps a morbid thought but I shall not do this again because once one reaches a certain age it becomes difficult to predict four years hence! And so, down tools again as new locomotives demand running in and programming, which prospect was more appealing than track laying, so the permanent way gang was stood down for a day or so. Photo 3 shows the three tracks now joined, points in position with the frog wires attached (yellow is Conrad's colour coding) and awaiting DCC and AC connections.

Mike Bennett

Loco-ites and Ju-Jubes

I was given a subscription to the London Review of Books. It has quite long articles which often mean you don't need to buy the books! The topics covered are varied and some articles are not book reviews at all, just items of interest. The latest issue has an article by Ian Jack called The Railway Hobby. It starts with the closure last October, of the last Ian Allan shop at Waterloo. We probably all remember the shop near New Street Station in Birmingham. The article gives an interesting biography of Ian Allan. His father worked at Christ's Hospital school in Sussex which still has its own railway station. Ian was sent away to school, where he lost a leg in a camping accident. During the war he became a clerk in the publicity department of the Southern Railway, answering queries about trains and engines. He suggested to the Southern that they produce a booklet of engines, but they declined, agreeing to let him do it himself. *The ABC of Southern Locomotives* appeared in 1942, followed by similar books on the GW, LMS and LNER. These books changed many boys of the period from stamp collecting and postcards to engines. The author of the article was taken by an older brother to the Manchester to Bolton line where he learned some of the jargon.

New numbers were 'copped'. A cry of 'Manny peg' meant a train had been signalled for Manchester. 'Coffee Pots' were elderly Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway goods engines. Ju-jubes were Jubilees, …

Ian Allan went on to build a publishing and travel empire run from Terminus House, a building next to Shepperton station in Middlesex (my wife Sue's local station). There were books about all types of transport, the magazine *Trains Illustrated*, a travel business and a car dealership; all now gone.

However, railway enthusiasm was not new in 1942. In 1896, the *Locomotive Magazine* was founded and called the hobbyists 'Loco-ites'. Two years later, a group of Birmingham loco-ites started detailing the locomotives of the LNWR in a book. This was followed by a paperback *A Register of All the Locomotives Now in Use on the L&NWR*. A move to London and a split led to the creation in 1909 of the Stephenson Locomotive Society, still running today.

Though he did not invent train spotting, Ian Allan certainly made it possible for generations of (mostly) boys and men. You still see chaps on the ends of platforms of the bigger stations, though now with smart phones and apps and sophisticated digital recording devices.

The article ends with a reference to *Reach for the Sky*, the biography of Douglas Bader and how, after being shot down, he was taken to the home of German ace Adolf Galland to see his elaborate model railway; a lesser version of Reichsmarshal Goering's railway. Ian Jack wonders if every railway modeller has an inner Reichsmarshal struggling to get out – to be the manipulator of all he surveys?

Nick Coppin

Backdrops, Empty Spaces, Factories and a Lumber Yard

My recent modelling has all been aimed at producing buildings to create the 1950s town of Diggory in the Appalachians. I always keep a weather eye out for bargains on Ebay and over the last few years have gathered quite a few suitable kits – and some for which I can now find no useful place at the moment. (To sell them back on Ebay, or to build an extension, that is the question!)

All layouts have a very large backdrop area that needs to be filled in as realistically as possible. Many of you have seen the large half-relief factory that I put together from a lot of Walther's Cornerstone Modular kits which I had bought for a song. I have now begun to blend this in with matching brick walls on either side made from brick papers printed from the internet and glued to foamboard, one of my favourite building materials, being rigid but light and easily cut. The large gates were hand made from plasticard.

There were plenty of modules left, so I have made another factory which, while still being three dimensional, projects less (about 1/2") than the first from the backdrop. You can see the same basic pattern of modules, but by using different windows and roof shape, no loading bay, and a different brick colour I do not think this is too obviously similar.

This has not been weathered yet, and, as with most of my buildings, lacks the necessary business name-boards (because these are a great matter of ongoing family debate and rivalry!), but it covers a pleasing stretch of real estate. I put black paper behind to block out the windows from showing the blue sky, but I now think this has too deadening an effect. On the other factory I have yet to put on any backing, and I feel this building looks, if not quite right, at least better. ***Has anyone any ideas as to the best way of tackling this?***

Also visible in the above photograph, with its placing effectively blocking the awkward background corner from view, is the local fire-station, which is a Walther's kit. We have decided that a serendipitous earlier purchase will make an excellent matching red fire-chief's wagon. I have not found a fire truck yet! The area between the fire-station and the tracks will be used to model the fire-station practice drill area, which I hope will be an interesting space filler. That is another problem on layouts, a lot of difficult to fill spaces between tracks and buildings.

The Lumber Yard, shown below, which is an Atlas kit, is served by a siding, with deliveries by boxcar or flatcar.

It came without the lumber, so I spent some time making wood stacks. Since life is too short to make each piece of timber separately, and because you cannot really see the side of the stacks, I used larger pieces of wood with the ends cross-cut with a scalpel. I then added randomly placed individual planks or sheets on top of the piles as shown in close-up, in the next photograph.

I was quite pleased with the effect, but I realised that the business would need an office and retail store as well as planks. The Cornerstone Modulars came into use once again, with just enough parts left to make a small building to serve customers with the other supplies you would expect to find in a lumber yard -nails, screws, glues, tools, stain, etc. I hope that the family kit resemblance is not too obvious.

I see from the cruelly observant photograph that the name-board on the roof is crooked, but that is because it is not yet attached. It will be much easier to fix the sign to it while the board is separate.

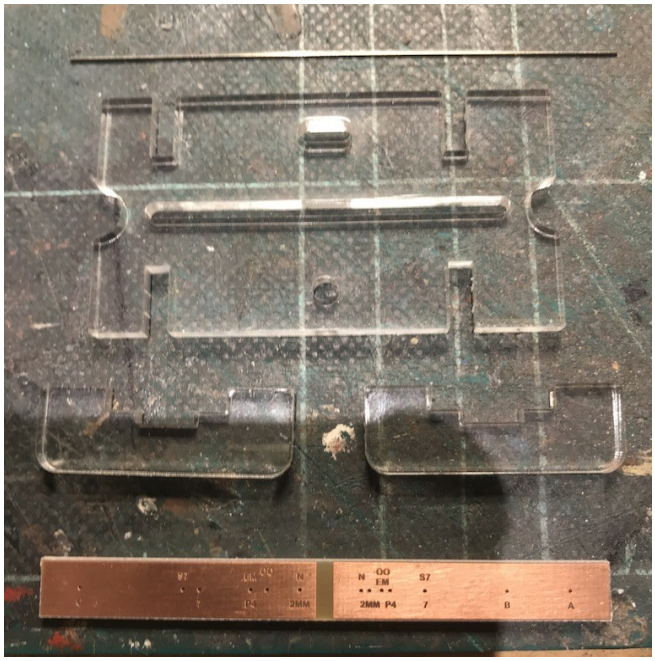
This photograph also gives a glimpse of the way in which I am trying to develop a visual depth to the townscape, with the visitor seeing discrete, differing views of the layout framed between the various foreground buildings. I hope to show more of this next month, when the fiendishly patience-demanding painting of a final row of shops will allow me to display some overall views of the more or less completed town buildings.

All this construction means I have been doing very little running and railway work, and it will be good to leave the civil engineering, (which my father, a mechanical engineer, dismissed as ‘muck-shifting’!) to get back to the more mechanical part of the hobby.

Peter Cox

Fitting (and adapting) the C&L Universal Switch Blade Bar - *Gordon Woods*

One of the (many) challenges of hand building your own points is the way in which the switch blades (the ones that move) are operated and in particular how they can be connected to point motors such as the Tortoise or the equivalent DCC Concepts Cobalt motor range. The main challenge is connecting the movement from the motor to the switch blades. Peco of course do it by means of a rather over-elaborate tie bar with a spring in the centre, which 'locks' the switch blades to one side or the other. There is a central hole to accept a wire from more or less any sort of point motor be it solenoid types or the slow-motion digital types. However, with hand-built track this is not possible if you want to keep the point looking prototypical: tie bars exist on the prototype but they are altogether more subtle than seen on the Peco point. It should also be said in passing that solenoid motors are not really suitable for hand build track as they slam the blades from one side to the other and hand build track is probably not robust enough to cope with that.

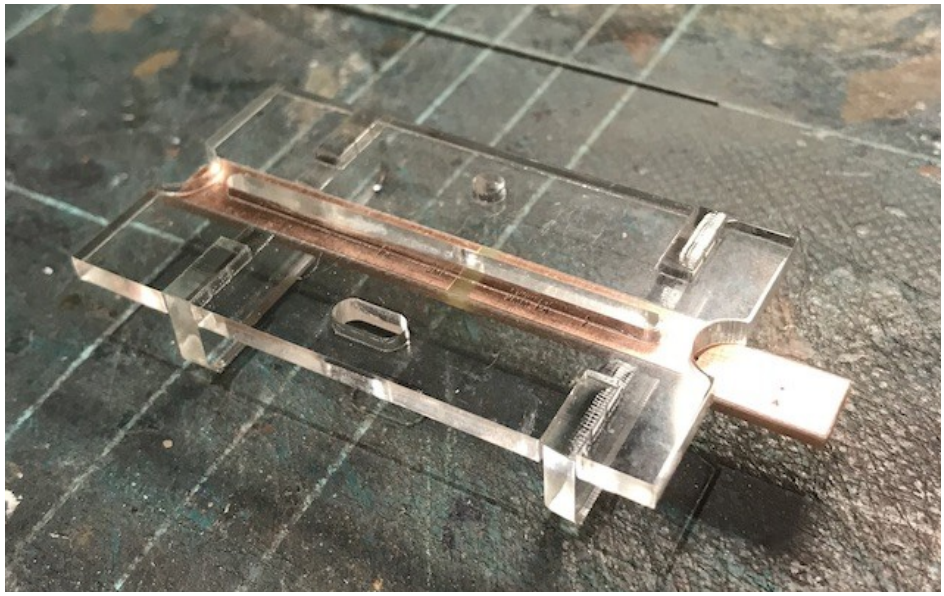


I had chosen to use the DCC Concepts IPDigital motors, which whilst by no means cheap, would connect well with the other digital devices, power and control systems I was looking at. The problem of the tie bar actuator remained however. That was until I noticed a C&L advert for what the call their 'Point Universal Switch Blade Bar'. This looked interesting and at £5, I decided to order a couple of examples to see if they could work with my 'stall motors' as they are generically called.

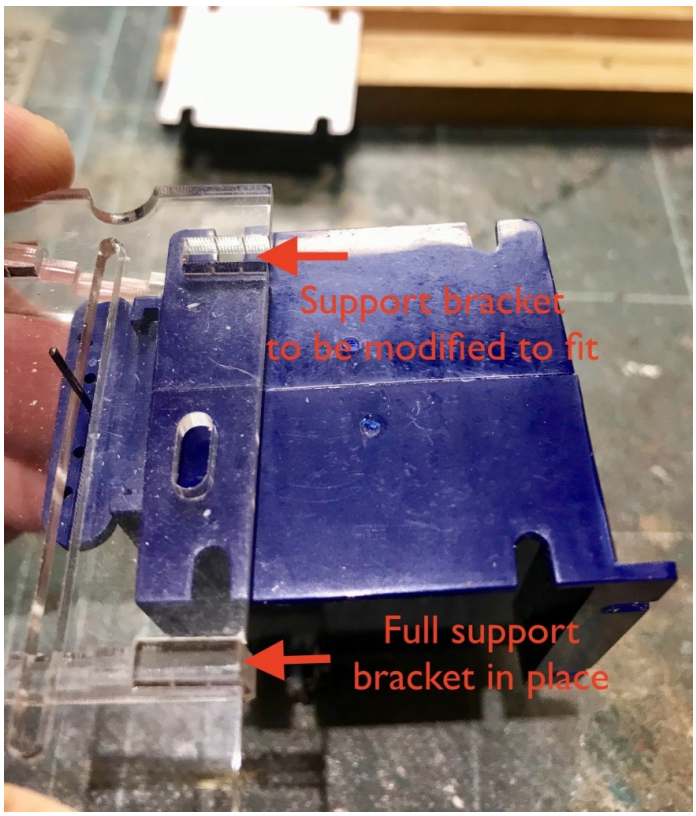
The C&L product comes with three pieces of hard Perspex (?) and a length of PCB strip which is marked with pilot holes for different track gauges (e.g. 2mm, OO, EM, P4, O). Also included is a length of piano wire for connection to (some types of) points.

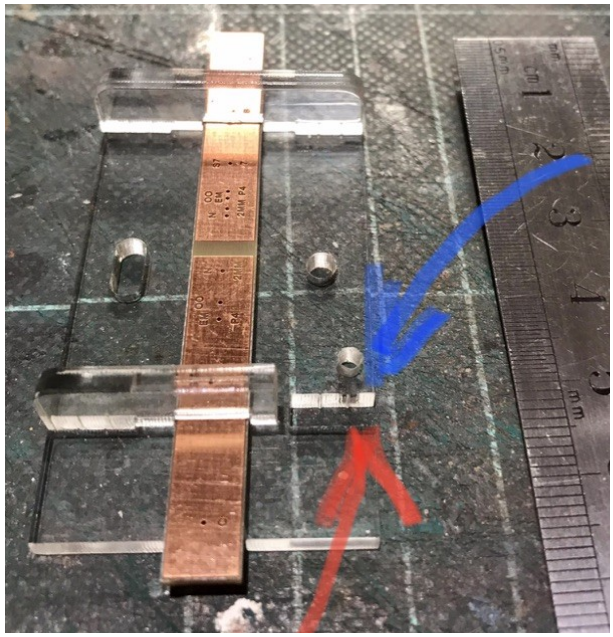
The Perspex pieces join together very simply with an interference fit, and create a simple base plate with two retainer pieces for the PCB strip.

The pic (right) shows a 'dry' assembly of a module with the top plate with central pre-cut slot above the PCB and the pre-drilled mounting holes. I added a spot of superglue to the final fit.



Before attending to connecting the module to the point, I had to decide how the module and the motor would fit together. I was reasonably confident that this could be done but that it might take some modification of the module. Offering the module up to the motor, I could see (rather frustratingly) that the two supporting brackets on the module were about 4mm too close together for the unit to sit over the motor without modification. Nevertheless, a simple modification looked possible and I shortened one of the PCB support brackets with a piercing saw, but ensuring that the PCB slider was retained (see red arrow below). A new fixing hole for a screw (see blue arrow below) was then drilled.

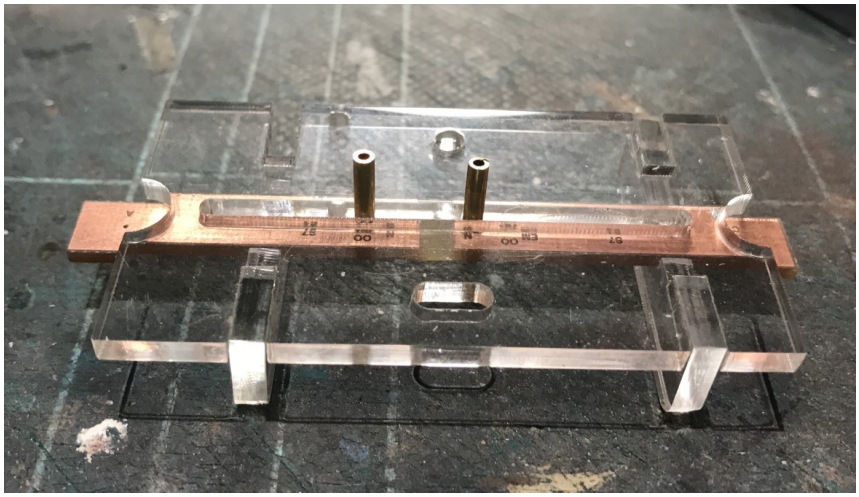




The solution. *Pic (above) shows the shortened support bracket, which still locates and holds the PCB in place but allows the unit to straddle the motor.*

The problem. *Pic (above L) shows the narrowness of the fitting of the support brackets on the module.*

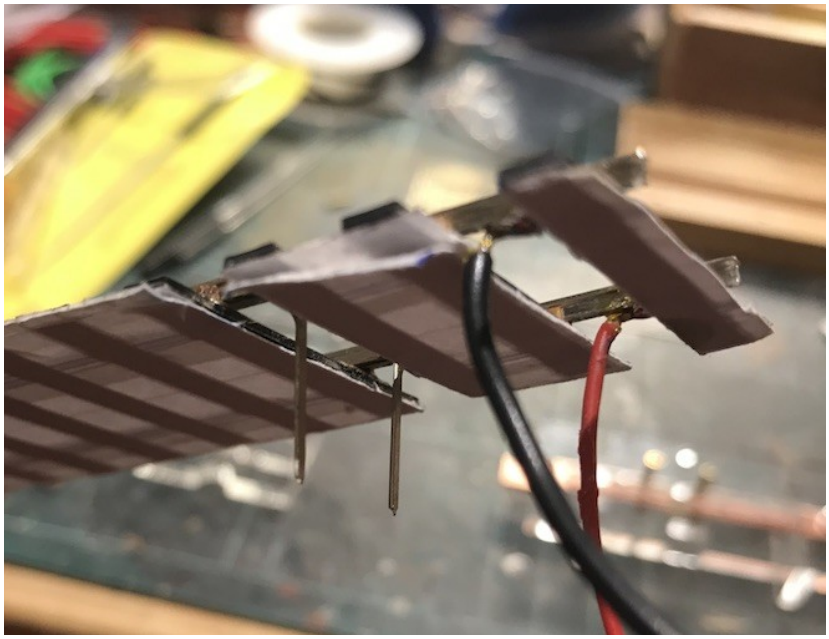
The next step was to connect the module to the point. I was aware that a number of modellers use a fine but robust dropper from the inside face of the switch rail, with each dropper then engaging in a length of brass tube which itself is fixed to their chosen actuator mechanism (in this case the PCB strip). The benefit of this arrangement it that as the switch blades swing from one side to the other there is a slight rotation, and to avoid the constant stressing a rigid joint, a degree of rotational movement is allowed as the dropper is free to rotate within the tube. The positioning of the brass tubes on the PCB strip has to be carefully measured from the desired dropper separation.



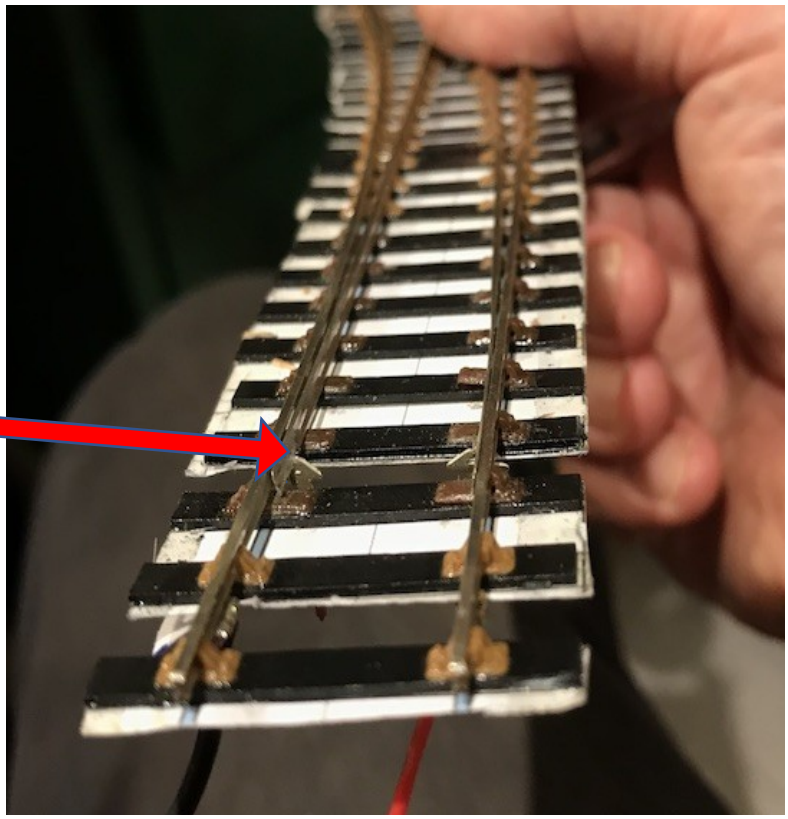
The two short lengths of brass tube were fixed to the PCB slider by marking, drilling pilot holes, then opening them out to create a tight fit between the tube and the PCB. The tubes were pushed through to

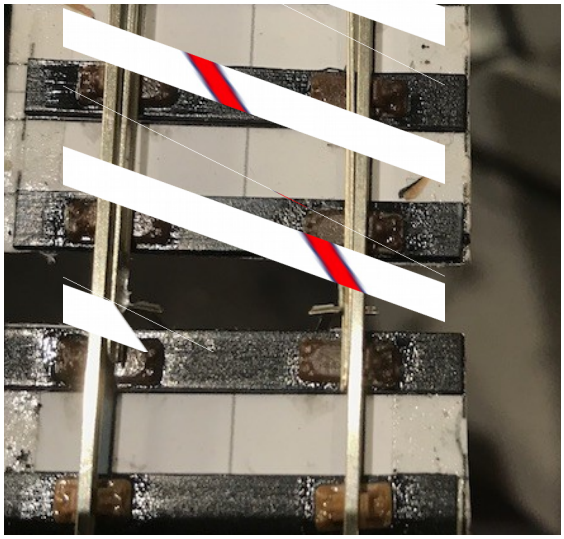
just extend below the PCB strip (by approx. 1mm) so that they could then be tack soldered to the lower side of the PCB. The tube lengths had to be sufficient to extend from the PCB strip up through a slot in the baseboard (I use 9mm ply) not far enough to interfere with the point itself, but enough to allow the droppers to fit comfortably into the tube.

The droppers I had chosen were from an etch produced by the late John Bailey but obtained from Gavin Clarke of Kerrinhead fame. These are extremely neat, although are fiddly to solder to the inside of the switch rail – especially if you have already assembled the point…but hey, you live and learn.
The clever thing about these droppers is that a tab folds on a half etch to lie inside the web of the switch rail, whilst another tab extends under the switch rail and under the stockrail thus preventing any tendency for the switch rail to rise above the desired height.

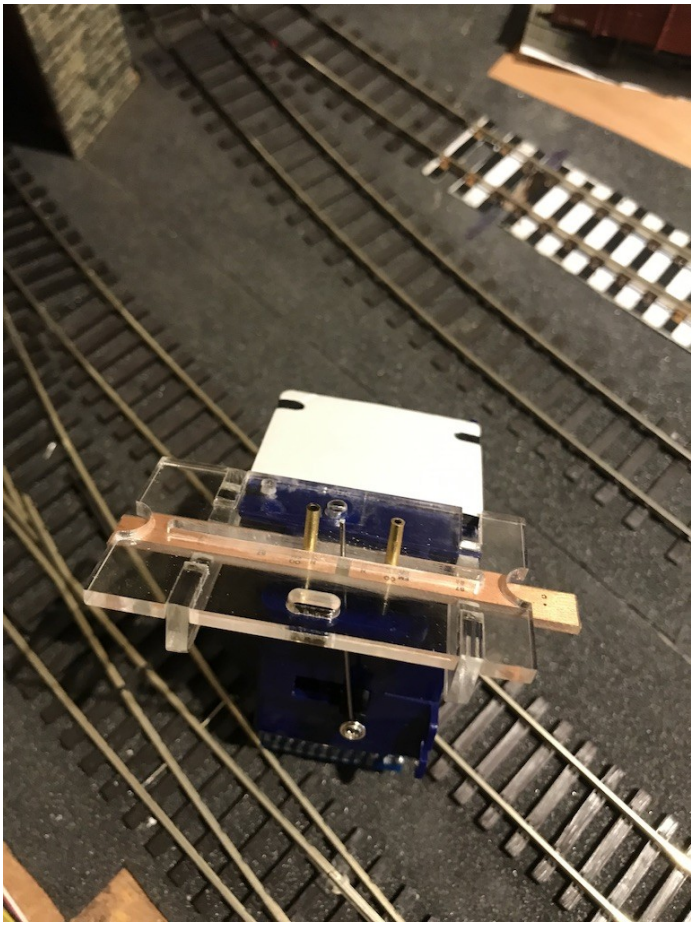


The visible edge of the etched dropper at track level; it extends below the 45° section. The shape provides strength without interfering with running.
The tab connecting the dropper to the switch rail is parallel to the rail. Very hard to photograph!





Left. The droppers from above. The tab was clearly not folded to a precise 90°!
[Anyone notice the deliberate mistake in the point construction?]

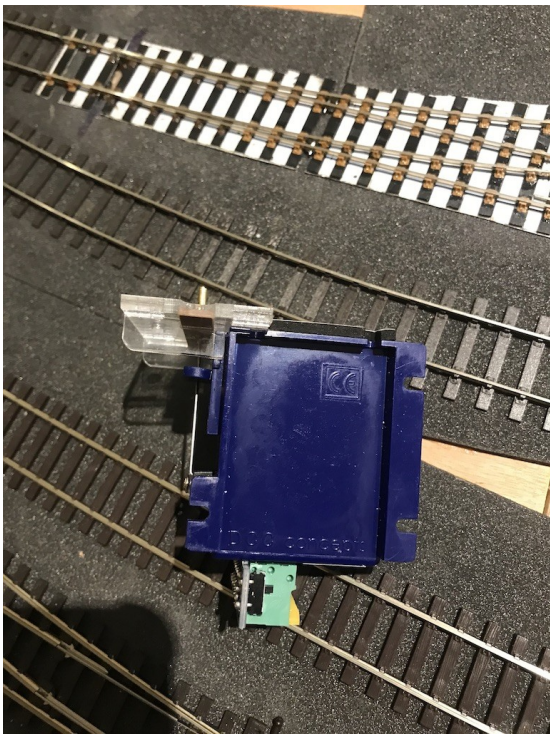


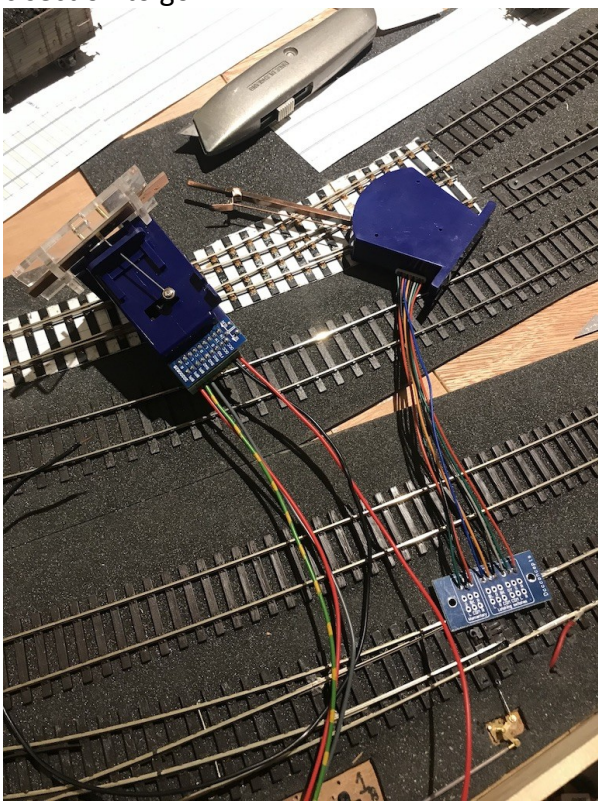
Left. The Cobalt motor with the modified C&L actuator ready for wiring and fitting below the point (in the background).

The actuator is held by double sided tape to the top of the motor. The foam pad (white item on motor) provided with the motor comes ready fitted with double sided tape so that it can hold the motor in place for alignment before final fixing with screws to the underside of the baseboard. Conveniently, the foam pad is more or less the same thickness as the Perspex actuator base, so forming a flat surface for fitting.

NB the two tracks the motor is sitting on will be off scene and are Code 75 Peco track and point work. These points are operated by surface mounted Cobalt SS point motors because of space issues below the baseboard (where there are to be lower level running lines) but that's a whole different story!

Below (left) side view of the actuator and the foam pad fitted to the motor. Below (right) motor wired and ready to connect to the point and the Cobalt S lever (which will be some distance from the motor). So, job done. Just another 22 points on the scenic section to go…





BOOKS AT CHRISTMAS

"What would you like for Christmas" is a regular request, and the reply is usually "well you could get me some books." This is in spite of having an extensive collection and wishing to downsize. This year I received the following:

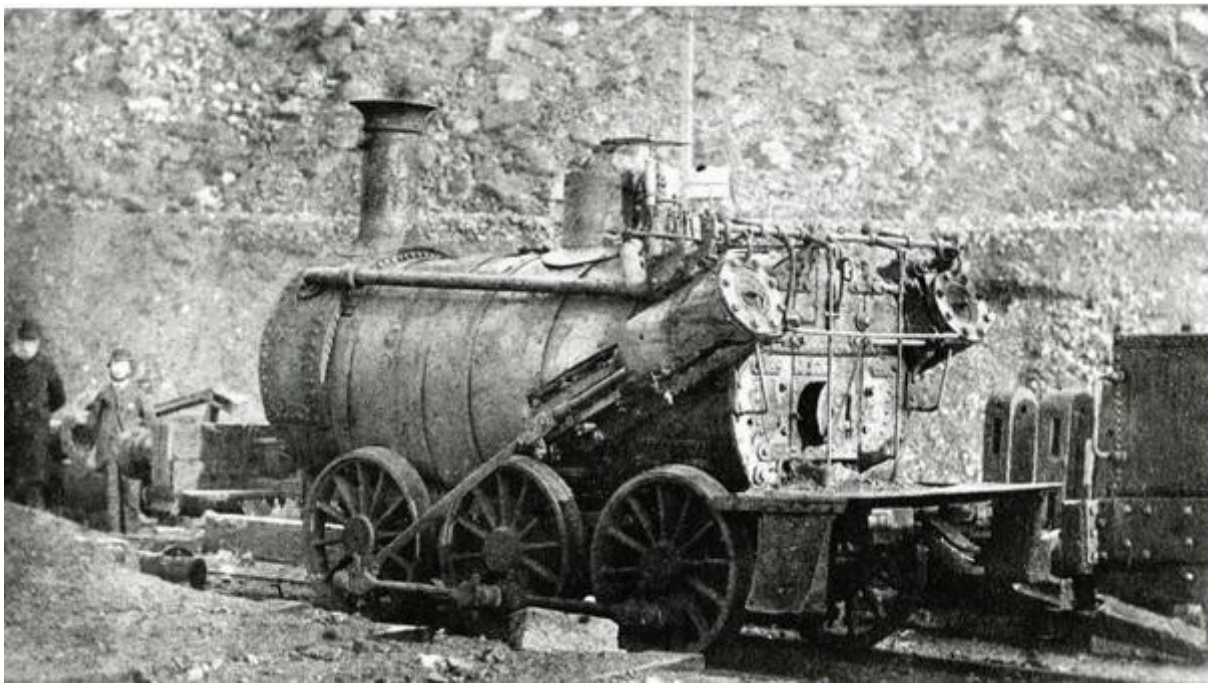
1. ***British Railway Stinks – the life and work of Britain's last Railway Chemists*** by Dave Smith and colleagues, published by Gresley Books 2019.

This is a most entertaining book and an easy read that tells of the exploits of the last generation of railway chemists and their experiences from the mid-1950s to 1990s and privatisation, and the end of the railway chemists. It is anecdotal and covers the everyday work and special investigations. Much work was done of lubricants and their employment in diesel engines. Steel rails were examined for faults and the dreaded leaf fall problem. My contact with them professionally was when I examined a group of followers (young dairy cattle) that died in a field beside the Birmingham to Bristol main line. The post-mortem indicated nitrate poisoning, but there should have been nothing in the field to act as a likely poison. A walk around the field yielded a large tin (unlabelled), beside the boundary fence, containing a greasy dark gooey material. A sample went to BR and the chemists confirmed it was an antifreeze material used by the track gangers in their work. The track gangers were duly admonished (they should not have transferred it to an unlabelled tin), nor left it where cattle could reach it. BR paid the farmer for his loss.
I can recommend this book, and whilst the cover price is £14.99, it seems readily available for around a tenner.

2. *Steam on the Sirhowy Tramroad and its neighbours* by Michael Lewis, published by RCHS in 2020.

If you are fascinated by old locomotives then this book is a real eye opener. It describes the extensive plateway systems in the western valleys of South Wales, the stock running on flangeless wheels to a gauge of 4 foot 4 inches. It describes the largest system of connected plateways in the world and an incredible total of 80 steam locomotives that ran on them. Whereas the book above was anecdotal, this is a fully referenced text by an eminent industrial archaeologist whose previous works have included *Early Wooden Railways* and numerous texts on the Festiniog and other North Wales narrow gauge lines. The work started as a modest study of the plateway locomotives of the Sirhowy Tramroad in South Wales, but grew to include adjoining lines and some human stories and methods of working. It is well written and easy to read, but it is the incredible variety of antiquated locomotives that were built for this system, a couple examples of which are shown below, which really surprise.

St David, built 1830 for the Sirhowy Tramroad by Tredegar Iron works. As running circa 1852



Bedwellty, built circa 1853 by Tredegar Ironworks. Photo taken about 1882. Around 1857-59 was fitted with flanged wheels to work on standard gauge edge rails. There is a suggestion that initially on conversion it had combined wheels, implying it could run on both edge rails and plate rails!

3. ***Before Rocket, the Steam Locomotive up to 1929*** by Anthony Dawson, published Gresley Books 2020.

Yet another book on early locomotives. This is a 100 page paperback that provides basic details of locomotives pre Rocket. It is well up to date as the Hetton locomotives *Billy* and *Lyon* were examined by Michael Bailey and Peter Davidson in an archaeological investigation. They discovered that *Billy* was the world's oldest surviving standard gauge locomotive of 1816, whereas *Lyon* was not built in 1822 but in 1852.

4. ***Main Line to the South – the Southern Railway Route between Basingstoke and St Cross, being part One of the Basingstoke, Winchester, Eastleigh and Southampton lines*** by John Nicholas and George Reeve, published by Irwell Press 2020.

As a devotee of the LSWR lines this was a must have book. It covers the line in detail station by station and from London and Southampton railway days up to the present. Not cheap at £35 but worth it.

5. ***The Southern Railway Oil-Burning Engines: 1946-1951*** by Kevin Robertson. A Southern Way Special Issue No 17. Published by Noodle Books 2020.

An interesting tome this dealing with the Oil-burning saga in the post war years. Basically, someone had the bright idea in using oil as a locomotive fuel and set about converting engines and putting in the infrastructure to refuel locos. But there was a problem in that Britain was broke after WW2 and could not afford to import the oil. This book deals with the process of conversion and subsequent abandonment on the Southern Railway and the nationalised Southern Region.

Stephen Duffell

Building Earls Bridge

Covid – will we ever forget it? By coincidence, just as the pandemic was becoming of concern, I had decided to bite the bullet and build a new layout. Whilst I was off to IKEA to buy some trestles, on the radio, the prospect of a lockdown was first being mooted!

My layout is still a long way from near completion but the photos here show progress to date.

Because I had a ready stock of 00 gauge pre-1923 NER and Midland Railway models I decided to again build for that period with the added feature of using the LMS/LNER models kindly given to me in a broken state by an exhibition trader. These have been re-liveried to the day immediately preceding nationalisation. You may recall me bringing them to a meeting. The fictional location had to be in my home County of Yorkshire where the NER and Midland had a history of joint ventures. The Otley – Ilkley Joint, the York to Sheffield line and the meeting up at Wensleydale and Normanton were examples. The NER even ran through to Bradford Forster Square from the NER at Harrogate. A little bit of research uncovered the Midland Railway buying significant property in Bradford in 1896 with a view to building a tunnel/cutting from Forster Square through to the south of Bradford and beyond. Although never actually built, the plan provides the idea for the 'Yorkshire Joint Railway'.

In theory, Earls Bridge is located on the moorland edge of a small industrial town in Calderdale between Bradford, Huddersfield and Sheffield. The name is a hybrid from Earlsheaton and Bailiffs Bridge.

Baseboards: 2x1 frame with 9mm mdf surface. The sides are stiffened by vertical quarter inch hardboard facias.

Wiring: Done in traditional sections to allow analog or dcc operation.
Track: The up line is SMP Scaleway. The down line is PECO bullhead. Points are copper clad SMP with SEEP solenoids. Fiddle tracks are PECO streamline.

Scenery: Carved polystyrene, cardboard, eggboxes and paper mashie to provide basic levels. These are covered in green dyed towelling stuck with PVA and static grass applied on top. Further scenic materials applied include various flock scatter, Woodland Scenics materials and dried moss from the garden.

Buildings: Mostly scratch built plasticard but I have succumbed to a few Metcalfe models. Some Ratio retaining wall is used and a signal box kit is also present. I was also given a few Hornby viaduct sections which I found useful as a scenic break in the model.

Much is still to do and some is already under consideration to re-do!

Graham Betts

Readers' Comments

Surprisingly there has been only one letter about the Quiz – a great compliment to the accuracy of our quiz-masters. Let's see if this puts the cat amongst the pigeons!

Eric Challoner writes:-

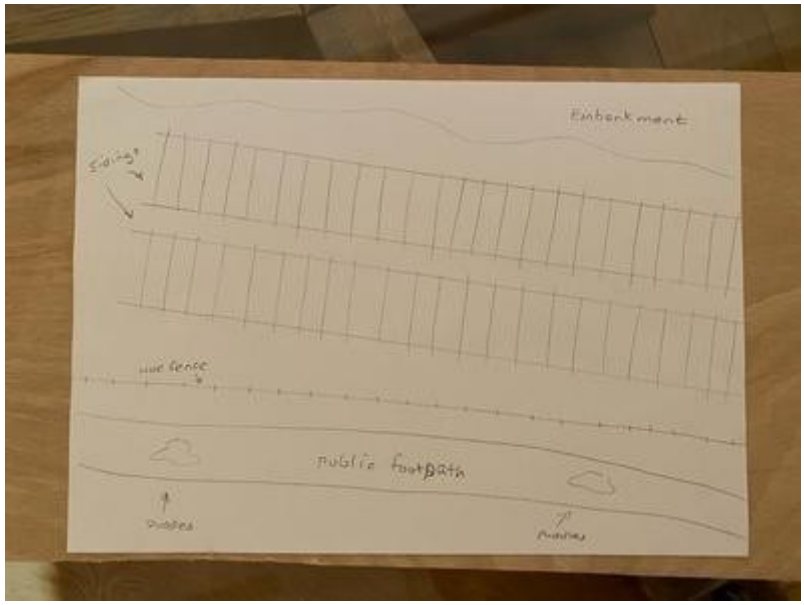
Just in case anybody queries question 19, I think you may find that the steepest gradient currently in daily passenger use on the UK network, is on the Looe branch between Liskeard and Coombe Halt.

The line descends over 200 feet on a spiral of 180' passing under three bridges (two road and one main railway line) at a steady 1 in 34, before making another 90' turn to arrive at Coombe Halt, where the train reverses to run to down the valley and alongside the river, all the way to to Looe - a journey well worth taking if you get the chance. Passenger services are usually worked by a single unit and freight from the cement works at Moorswater are short length of necessity, due to the gradient, and hauled by a class 66 loco. They used to be hauled by two class 37's and you needed ear plugs during the climb.

Sam Ryan writes with information on his new project and a request:-

'Weathered Siding'

After quite a sabbatical of not doing any form of modelling due to work commitments, I'm finally getting back into a new diorama project, all thanks to Dave's presentation at our last zoom meeting.
My plan is to do a diorama board of a disused siding with a few weathered rolling stock. Plenty of weeds and overgrown foliage will highlight the decaying nature of the scene. I will be using 00 gauge for a change as I've an abundance of 00 track and rolling stock I can experiment with.



(It's not the best 'blueprint' but is just to give a rough idea on what I'm hoping to achieve)

I am also planning on making my diorama appear as if it has just been through a damp wet day, which will feature sodden ground and puddles dotted about all over the diorama. Water features is something I've been meaning to have a proper go at since our first diorama challenge (my bridge over the river) and I am keen to try and create more intricate water features you often see but overlook. I'll also be included (hopefully) a back scene which will be painted a grey cloudy skyline, which hopefully will set the mood for my diorama.
I'll be experimenting in trying out different techniques of modelling such as weathering rolling stock. My plan is to weather a coach and some trucks into a poor sorry state (a sight often seen among sidings at heritage railways). It's certainly daunting as I've never actually weathered anything in more detail, but willing to give it a good go.

It may not sound or look much but hopefully I'll learn some much more intricate modelling skills that will help bring the scene a much more realistic viewpoint. ***If anyone has any advice or tips on weathering or applying water features (puddles etc), I'll be happy to take on any knowledge the group may have.***

And, while Sam is on the line, ***Howard Mainwaring*** writes:-

My Birthday this year was last week, and due to lockdown restrictions, my daughter and son-in-law were unable to visit. So she had a bright idea, knowing that a certain Sam Ryan was a dab hand at knocking up delicious Pork Pies, and a request was made to Sam, who kindly agreed to make a surprise delivery.

You will see from the photo of the said Pork Pie, (I can tell you it was mouth-wateringly tasty) that Sam is very creative with producing Jinty steam engine pastry models, which you will see on the top of the pie. Thank you.

Sam, I understand, was very interested with the Swiss diorama which Dave had been building and which he gave us a very good commentary and useful tips, in the January zoom meeting.

Seeing that Sam is very efficient at producing good models in pastry, what about we give him encouragement to build a diorama in pastry. He could select a local station in whatever gauge size he likes, and for railway lines, tree trunks and any fencing, we would allow him to use spaghetti, suitably coloured. I am sure Sam could also find a small space to add some pork.

A big thank you Sam for the lovely Pork Pies you have provided for us at previous meetings, which we were able to hold at the Priory some time ago.

The railway quiz

It's time to give your brain a workout with our three railway quizzes.

Round up some friends or family (virtually, for now), pop the kettle on, or pour yourself something a little stronger, and get yourself comfy for some quizzing time.

We've got three quizzes to take you on a journey to see how much you know about Scotland's railway, railways around the world and the wonderful fictional world of trains.

With all this time on our hands at the moment, it's nice to look back and relive some favourite memories from childhood books, tv and films that perhaps piqued your interest in trains.

Let us know how you get on over on our social channels.

Good luck!

Scotland

1. There are three stations in Scotland that are the only ones beginning with their particular first letter. Can you name them?
2. In 2018-19, how many passengers passed through Glasgow Central?
   a) 29,876,421
   b) 30,697,014
   c) 32,797,088
3. Can you name the station that features in the Trainspotting?
4. Inter7City trains call at Scotland's seven cities. Can you name them all?
5. What is the smallest place in Scotland to have two stations?
6. What is the most westerly station in Scotland?
7. Glasgow Central was built over a village. What was it called?
8. What is the oldest station in Scotland?
9. If you were looking to visit the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie, where would you get off the train?
10. Which two stations are only one minute apart by train but would take 20 minutes to drive between?

International

For the next part of our quiz we're going international.
There are some really cool railways all across the world!

1. What is the highest railway line in the world?
2. What is the busiest station in the world?
3. What is the largest country in the world with no railway network?
4. How long does the train journey from Sydney to Perth (Australia!) take?
5. Which country has the shortest rail network?
6. Which station has the most platforms in the world?
7. The 20 busiest stations by passenger numbers are in one country.
   Can you name the country?
8. What is the longest train journey in the world?
9. If you found yourself standing in Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus,
   in what city would you be?
10. In which country would you find the 'Tren a las nubes' (train to the clouds)?

Fictional

For our last round we're delving into the wonderful world of fictional trains.
Many a happy childhood memory revolves around books and tv programmes about trains.

1. In which fictional town would you find trains named Wilson, Koko and Brewster?
2. Thomas the tank Engine lives on the island of Sodor, can you name three
   of his friends?
3. The Hogwarts Express travels over the Glenfinnan Viaduct en route
   to Hogwarts. What time does the train depart London Kings Cross?
4. There are two trains Postman Pat could take if he fancied a day out.
   Can you name one of them? Bonus point if you can name the train driver too.
5. What is the name of the family in The Railway Children?

Guards Van

None of you apparently recognised Eric Challoner as the guard in the photograph last month. The train was the 7.00am loose coupled freight from Coton Hill to Aberystwyth and it has stopped just short of Welshpool station (roughly where the wide road into Welshpool now sits). This is the only known shot of Eric as a Guard, taken in November 1974, but as it was some 46 years ago you are forgiven!

Here is a more recent, brighter photograph from Eric's album:-

Nick Coppin has been more recently busy in the great outdoors despite the weather, which he describes as 'a bit parky'. This is his Baguely diesel loco pulling a train of V skip wagons on his 16mm scale garden railway. Perhaps, as we all hope, spring will be here before too long after all!