

THE MICRO MODEL RAILWAY DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway designer, builder and enthusiast



Micros around the world!



Issue 2. Autumn 2021

THE DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway layout designer, builder and enthusiast

Issue 2 of **The Dispatch** is here, a little later than planned. I hope you find the varied content worth the wait.

Micros around the world, is the headline on the cover. I certainly think that's an apt description of this edition.

Modellers for whom English is not their first language, need not feel daunted by submitting layouts to us. To prove that our first layout in this issue comes from Germany.

Have you ever seen a Brazilian model railway layout? I didn't even know you could buy Brazilian model trains. It seems you can, so we end our issue with a Brazilian Railroad micro. In between all these global goodies are layouts from H0 to G.

There's a couple of classic micros that I hugely admire for their creativity, showing what you can do if you put your mind to it. Our O scale offerings are a great example of people developing friendships and working together. Jim Read inspired Jeremy Nunn to build his O scale layout.

I, myself, am also interested in how people got started building micro layouts and what their philosophies are. So in this issue Rod Shaw shares his thoughts about beginning to build micros.

I hope you all enjoy all the varied content.

See you in December. With some Christmas micros.

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If you like what you read here, then you can subscribe. Just email MMRDeditor@gmail.com and I'll put you on the mailing list. You'll be able to download the magazine a whole week before general release.

I look forward to hearing from you.

“Micro layouts are small model railroads, usually less than three or four square feet in area that nonetheless have a clear purpose and excellent operating capability.”

Carl Arendt

Gauge H0 60(70)cm x 20cm (plus Fiddleyard)



An overall view of Thomas' layout

I have been fascinated by micro layouts for a long time, but with many of them I always wondered how they could be used without it getting boring quickly. I discovered a solution in a layout by Ian Holmes: dice!

So I created my own rules for my track plan, and actually it stays entertaining for a long time. Then it was time to implement the planning. The absolute minimum dimension in gauge HO is 40cm x 15cm, but after a few tests I decided on a size of 60cm x 20cm, because it was important to me that the locomotive drives completely into the designed area with every

shunting step. In addition there are 10cm (not designed) and the attachable Fiddleyard. I used track material from Maerklin, the buildings (facades) are from Auhagen BKS (modular system). On the painted background there are printouts of pictures of buildings edited on the PC. Loading/unloading stations are a short stretch of loading road, a tank car unloading point and a ramp at a warehouse. The switch is set with a simple copper rod, and two self-made uncouplers were installed, which are also moved manually.

Editor Says:

Thomas refers to a dice operating method that I described. This was quite a few years ago now, when I was building Cuplars Fine Tile and Ceramics. The layout that was the precursor to Purespring Watercress. I had worked out an operating system around the factory processes using the

throw of a dice. I had even allowed for locomotives and machinery breaking down. The unfortunate demise of the Cuplars layout meant the operation scheme was never used, but you can find it at <https://www.carendt.com/micro-layout-design-gallery/micro-layouts-using-just-one-switch/>

Rules of the game:

The game is played with at least six wagons and two locomotives:

Covered freight cars, tank cars, open freight cars (at least two each).

Depending on the type, the wagons are assigned to one of the three positions A, B and C:

Covered freight wagons on the ramp of the warehouse (A), tank wagons to the tank car unloading point (B) and open freight wagons to the loading road (C).

There is also a "free" position on which freight wagons can be made available (D).

All types of wagons can stand in this position.

Appropriate cars are placed in positions A-C before the start of the game.

Now you can start: roll the dice...

Throw 1, 2 or 3, the carriage in position A (at 1), B (at 2) or C (at 3) is exchanged with a wagon. If position D is free, the new car is moved there and the old car remains in its position. If a wagon is in position D, it will be shunted to the corresponding position, and the car standing there on the Fiddleyard.

A 4, you choose a position (A, B or C) and clear it. This position is then filled again after the next turn.

A 5, a locomotive change takes place: the current locomotive drives to the Fiddleyard and is exchanged.

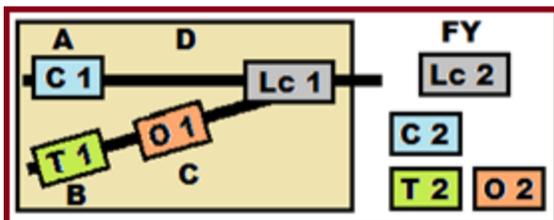
A 6, - wild card! You just choose a move...

To avoid direct repetitions (if you roll the same number in a row), you can roll until another number comes up.

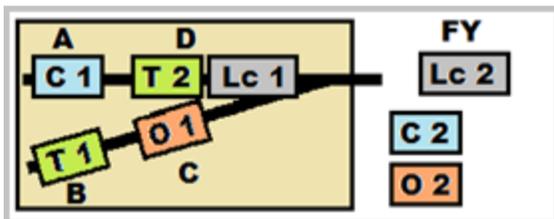
Schematic representation of the shunting game



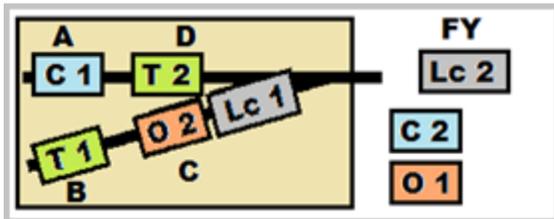
Starting Position



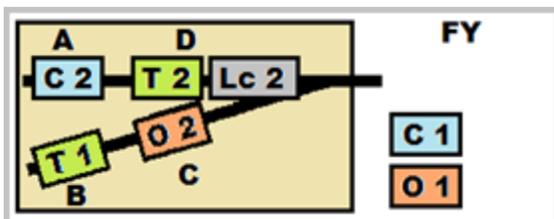
1. Move: Dice shows "2"



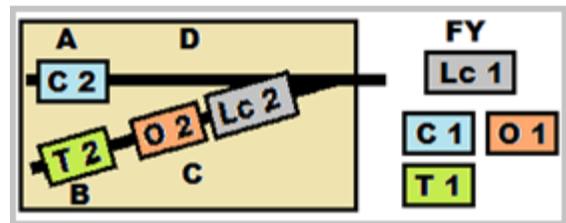
2. Move: Dice shows "3"



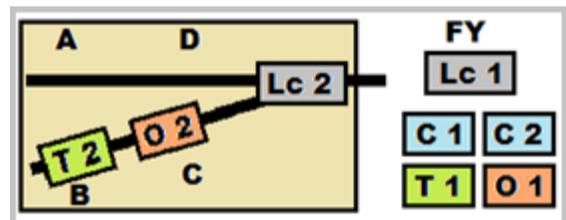
4. Move: Dice shows "1"



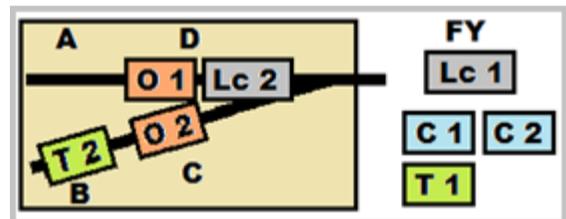
5. Move: Dice shows "6"



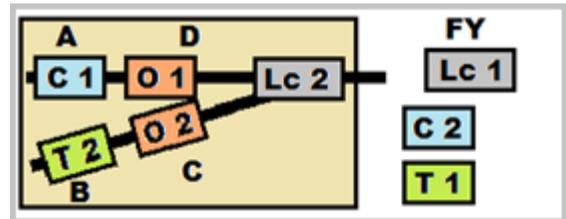
6. (a) Move: Dice shows "4"



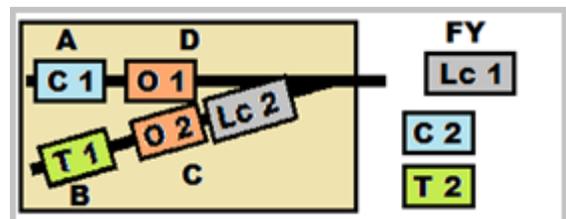
8. Move: Dice shows "3"



6. (b): End Move Nr.6



9. Move: Dice shows "2"





If you roll a 6 (the joker), you can also bring a completely different wagon into play. Here, for example, a long four-axle wagon is currently being shunted to the previously cleared loading

road. Next, the covered freight wagon (in front of the warehouse ramp) could be swapped for its counterpart before the four-axle vehicle is shunted out again...



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Despite the small size of the layout, Thomas has managed to add some nice detailing



Two socially distanced gentlemen discuss the days operating session



Where's the fire?



All this operational goodness in this small package.

Musings on Micros

Rod Shaw tells how he got started

It took me a while to kick the habit. I mean the round-and-round layout which you think will be far more interesting than an end-to-end, especially a small one. When I started railway modelling, and for many years after, I couldn't see the point of a layout which gave no opportunity to let the trains rip around a continuous run.

So the first three layouts I built, albeit small, were all continuous runs. Because I didn't have much space and I liked the scale anyway, they were all TT 3mm scale. They all had sidings though, and gradually I found I was using them more and more. Eventually, with my third layout, which had a concealed section of track at the back acting as a fiddle yard, I realised I was using it to stop a train, then bring another round to the front to stop at the station or to shunt wagons in the sidings. In other words, I'd started to use the layout as if it were an end-to-end.

Then I had a light-bulb moment: I'd completely lost interest in watching trains whizz round and round, so why not make an end-to-end shunting layout instead? I still wasn't totally convinced about it but decided I might as well try it out. Among other things it meant I no longer needed width as well as length – something about a foot wide would be all I needed. Not needing room for the oval also meant I could go up a scale – in my case from TT to HO – and at the same time try out those American trains I'd always had a hankering for but thought I didn't have room for.

So I built my first micro layout, Yorkford, PA, in American HO. In scale, locale and design it was totally different from anything I'd done before. I loved it. I got into switchlists, and marvelled at the smooth, quiet running and easy uncoupling of those American models.

Digital sound followed (something else I'd always thought was a bit pointless) and I love that too – used in moderation (and not too loud), it adds atmosphere.

Then I discovered American TT – there was just enough on the market to make a viable layout, so I sold Yorkford, PA and most of my HO and made Naples Street.

I've found that I do need to be able to operate a micro layout for it to be interesting, rather than make a static model. The fiddle yard and any headshunt need to be able to accommodate at least the longest loco plus two freight cars.

Ideally the sidings should have room for at least two freight cars as well.

I've now started building another American layout, a harbour scene in HO to run what's left of my locos and stock in that scale. At 56 inches by eight including an integrated fiddle yard, it presumably still qualifies as a micro layout, or else it's pretty close.

Of course, you can just about make a micro layout with a continuous run if you like. But give me a few sidings to shunt (I should say switch) – and of course reliable track, locos and stock - and I'm happy.



Now read on, and find out about Rod's first layout, Yorkford, PA.

Yorkford, PA

Rod Shaw's first micro layout

Gauge H0: size 48 inches x 12 inches.



Rod's layout nicely presented at a model railway exhibition in the UK

My first micro layout was unashamedly based on Norman Raven's Bart, an N gauge layout which featured in 'Continental Modeller' in 2002. Not being particularly drawn to N gauge though, I tried a similar idea in HO. It represents a small industrial complex on the outskirts of a fictional town in Pennsylvania. The name is an amalgam of York and Bradford, both of which I have lived in and both of which have their counterparts in the US state.

The layout was what I would call semi-prototypical. In reality York and Bradford are both served by Class III (shortline) railroads. York has the York Railway, which operates the former Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad, and Bradford is served by the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Railroad. Both are owned by Genesee & Wyoming Inc. and have identical paint schemes. It would have been nice to reproduce something like this combination on Yorkford. In practice though, finding models of shortline locomotives

and stock is difficult, As my painting skills would most likely ruin a model, I decided to stick to Class I locomotives which are more or less suitable for the area and period modelled. A period that spanned a couple of decades from the late 1970s onwards. At the start of this period, a varied mix of railroads such as Western Maryland, Chessie and Conrail operated in Pennsylvania. Even though later on modern giants CSX and Norfolk Southern swallowed up many of the smaller railroad companies, much stock retained the colours and markings of their predecessor 'fallen flag' railroads. The shorter 40ft boxcars had also disappeared by the end of the 70s, but some made a belated appearance on the layout. Seasoned operators advise us to pinpoint our layout location on a map, so in my fiction, Yorkford was located on Coxes Creek between Somerset and Rockwood in southwestern Pennsylvania. The line used to be the Somerset & Cambria, and is now a subdivision of CSX.

Track and points were Peco code 100, with the switchblades bonded to their stock rails for reliability.

I started off with DC locos but eventually converted them all to DCC or bought DCC locos ready-fitted with sound. The sound for the

others was produced by two under-baseboard sound decoders. Power was provided by a Roco Multimaus controller.

All locos and stock were weathered to some extent



A very natural, well observed scene

The industries were made from low relief resin, plastic and plaster kits from Unit Models, Walthers and Ten Commandments, with extra bought or scratch-built components added to provide detail or add depth. They were brush-painted with acrylics and enamels, and lightly weathered with powdered pastels.

Most of the other scenic items, such as oil tanks, cable reels and removable gondola loads, were scratch-built.

The layout was lit by a warm white LED strip attached to a pelmet (*valance in US speak*) that displays the nameplate and other details.

The factory chimney at Sunderland Engineering would smoke on demand at the press of a button which was conveniently positioned in the fascia for spectators at shows to have a go. A kit-built timer unit would switch the smoke off after a minute or so.



I like to operate a layout using a switchlist. Switching a small layout can be a pretty tight affair, especially if you try and obey prototype rules. For example, keeping the grade crossing free wherever possible, and ensuring that a tank car carrying flammable liquid has a buffer car between itself and the loco. The fun increases when the team track is occupied; as this doubled as a spur for the run-round loop, any car on it usually had to be moved into the loop to be out of the way and returned later. Add in the occasional caboose getting parked on the tracks, and things could get nicely clogged up.

I have found that if a layout has industries on both trailing and facing point spurs, a run-round is essential to get the loco in the right place without too much manual intervention.

Even with just a handful of industries and a few spots to make at each one, it's surprising how much variety can be generated by introducing a random element to the switching order.

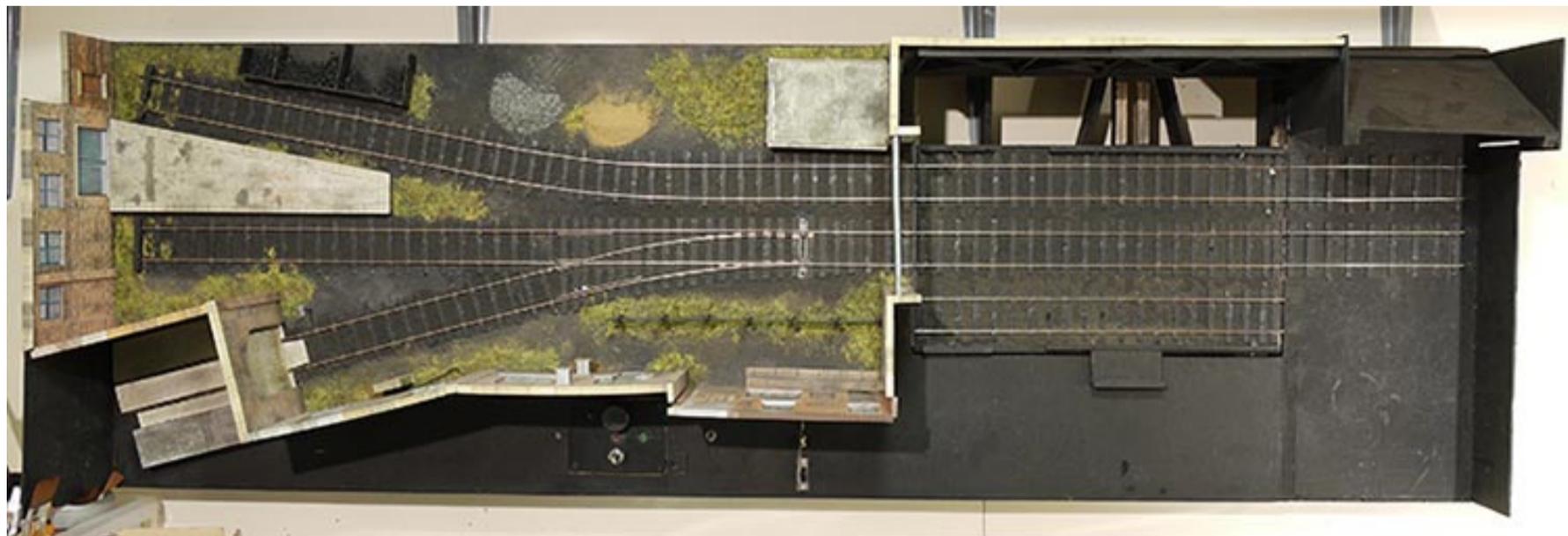
So there we are – my first micro layout. A change in scale, concept and prototype location from anything I'd done before, and I loved it. Eventually I sold it on but I was totally sold on the idea so I started building another.



Moxley

Jim Reed's first micro

Gauge O: baseboard size 55" x 18" less fiddle yard Scenic area 3.4 sq.ft.



The simple track plan. The lengths of the sidings and the traverser have been carefully calculated to maximise operation. Only one wagon at a time can be shunted.

Moxley is in the triangle formed by Wednesbury, Bilston and Willenhall, it's a sort of run down urban light railway.

I made the baseboard from 5.5 mm plywood with cross members and diagonals under it to counteract any warping. It's very lightweight and can be carried in an out of shows quickly and easily.

This was my first micro beginning in 2009 and taking a year to make. I spent a few weeks doodling track plans starting with the ubiquitous Inglenook. I soon realised that I like operating, the potential using the design would soon turn out to be boring.

The fixed loco release at the end means that the top and bottom roads on the traverser can be used for storage and the loco can get to the back of them. It also means that once the stock is on the layout I don't have to handle any of it.

Despite its simplicity the movements required to move stock around can be very complex and enjoyable.

I made the track from Code 100 rail glued to

card sleepers and the point from copperclad strips.

For less than the cost of one O Gauge point I can make a whole micro layout's worth of track. The rail is held down with 7mm narrow gauge track spikes. I went to Sheffield on several Sundays to take photos of old industrial buildings and turned those into low relief models. I also used photos of doors and windows from Textures.com. A great place to find all sorts of stuff free.

When I took it to a show for the first time, I realised what I had been missing. Prior to that I'd been running up and down a 12ft effort. I sit on an upturned waste bin, which doubles as a carrier for odds and ends. I have two chairs at the front and visitors can sit and chat, I can listen and talk and operate at the same time. I've met loads of very interesting people over the years and I hope encouraged some of them to make their own micros.



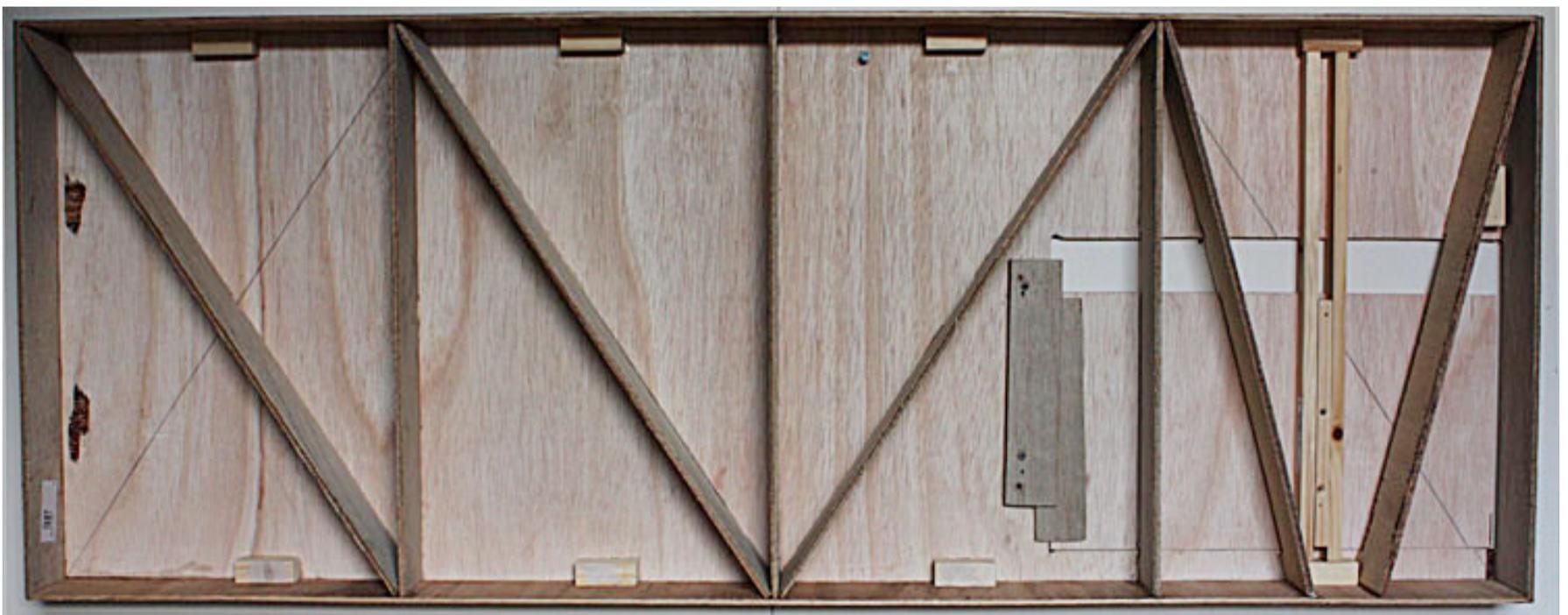
Everything in this view of Jim's layout is scratch built in cardboard



Even the coach is cardboard.



I find this scene quite remarkable. Look at the gap between the two buildings in the centre. There's such depth there. Clever use of building photographs on the flat back scene has made everything look much much bigger than it is



This is the underside of Jim's layout. Built from 5.5mm (1/4") plywood. The framing and cross bracing makes for a very lightweight but rigid structure. Layouts built from thinner plywoods and braced in this manner are quite popular in the UK where the need to make layouts easily transportable to take to model railway exhibitions is paramount

Fleet Siding

Jeremy Nunn

Gauge O: size 48" x 16" less traverser.

I have modelled in various scales over many years, but it was not until I read details of Jim Read's work with card that I realised that O gauge was attainable.

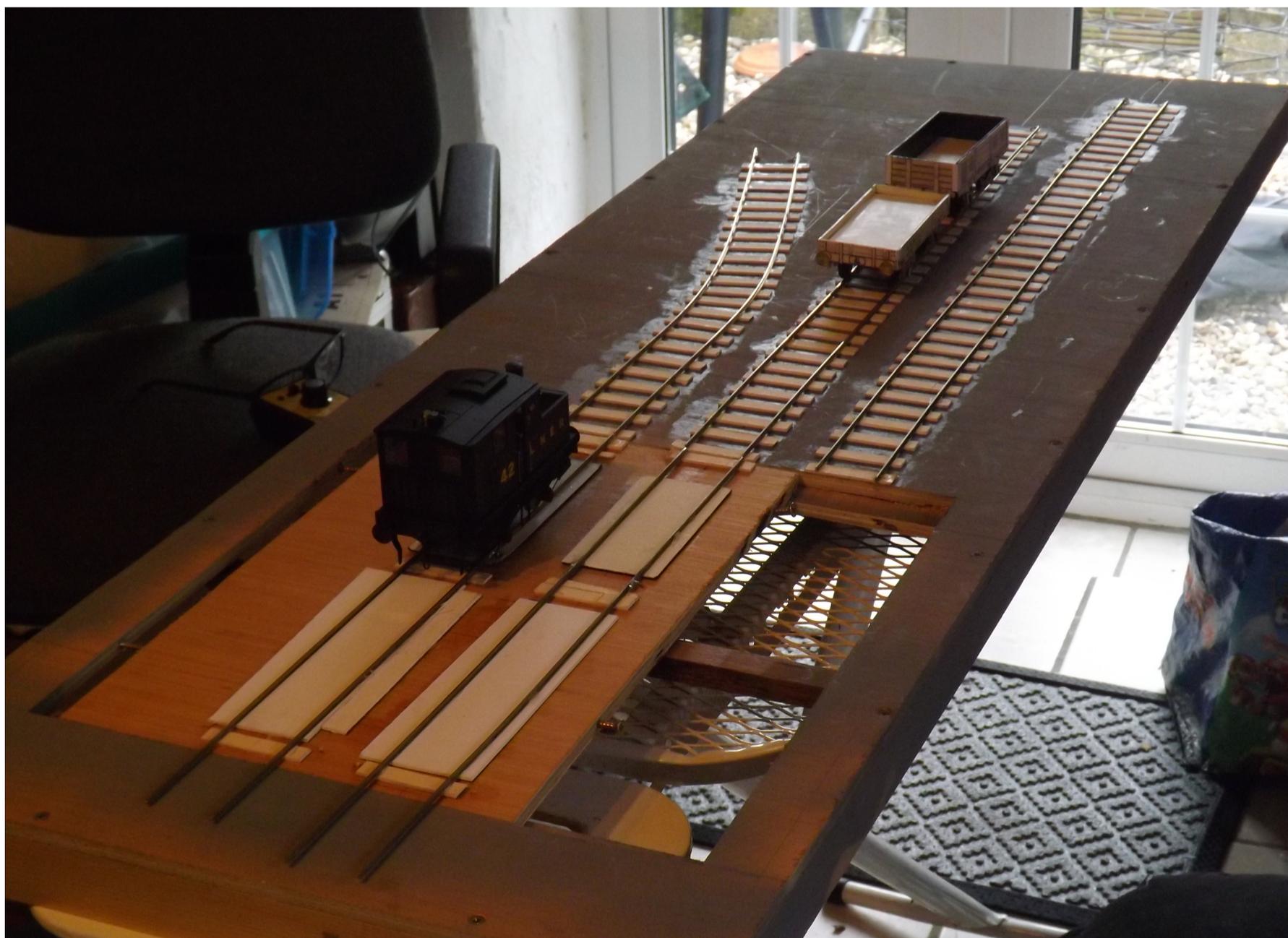
I sold all of my existing OO and HO stock and a good deal by my local model shop gave me the opportunity to buy a Dapol Sentinel RTR. Living in Norfolk means I have always had an interest in agriculture so a micro combining that and railways was the idea.

The board is of 9mm ply, framed and diagonally braced by 30 x 10 softwood.

Track is code 100, recovered from spare OO gauge laid and superglued to card sleepers. The traverser is a copy of that described by Mr. Read.

I have made a start of making card rolling stock, with some success and some failures...happy to admit it. But all very enjoyable.

Pictures show various stages of the build so far...structures are of card or foam board faced with downloadable brick paper.



Jeremy was inspired to build his layout seeing Jim Reed's creations on the website RMWeb. Many of the construction techniques used on this layout are the same as on Jim's.



These images, above and below, show how the layout is progressing. All coming along very nicely.



O gauge box file

Jordan Foster

Gauge O: 14" x 11"

A few years ago, there was a lot of interest in building micro-layouts in A4-size box files. I decided to join in, with a version in O Scale. Two pieces of old Lima set track fitted in perfectly. I cut the side out completely due to the loading gauge - OO & N versions could cut a hole in the side.

I tried British O for size, and for a giggle, some American O Scale as well; after I put a loading platform next to the curved track, which is about 2ft radius, the U.S. boxcar would no longer fit, so I only ever operated this layout 'properly' with U.K. models.

As well as the platform I finished the lid as a high-level loading dock for tipping loads from lorries into Lima 16t mineral wagons. A block

of wood was placed under it to hold it level! A photo of a pile of scrap metal was fitted to the end of the box. The hut on the platform wasn't fixed, and later found a permanent home on another layout of mine called "Withyn Reach".

A simple cassette track was made to act as a fiddlestick; this had the power wires fixed to it, and brass rod soldered to the outside of the rails, which slid on to the boxfile rails, locating the track & transferring power as well.

It was stored in my shed for some time, during which the rails rusted and it deteriorated due to damp, so it was disposed of a couple of years ago.

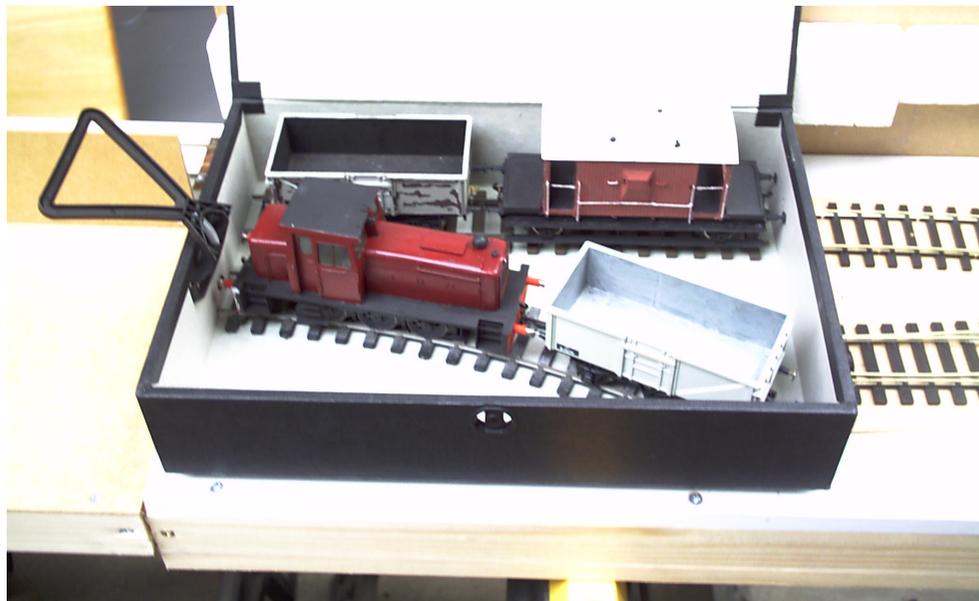


This is about all the track you can fit in a box file in O scale. Is it worth it?

Hmmm... American O scale stock really does over fill the box file.



English O scale gives a little more room.
Four wheel wagons means there's no
overhang from the rolling stock on the tight
curves



As this is the sort of layout that sits on a
kitchen table for a little fun shunting every
now and again, electrical contact between
the fiddlestick train storage and the layout,
needs to be nothing more than simple clips.

That little building on the platform there,
just makes me smile and say to myself.
“That’s just right.”





In answer to the question in the first picture. Yes, it is worth it.

The editor adds:

Jordan's layout is one that epitomises the spirit of the early days of micro layout design.

The rules were there to be broken.

Using a large scale like O in a tiny box file?

Why not? The creative thinking processes attached to producing this design can be used in any scale.

I am particularly drawn to the way that one small building sits on the curved platform. It feels so natural to me. It's just the right size and helps to create the

atmosphere. More details on the platform would really set this off

Not much operation for you? Then take a look at the mechanised features being built by Giles Favell these days (search for him on YouTube). It's quite feasible to have a dump truck drive up to the tipping dock, reverse around and empty its load into the wagon below. When the wagon is full then a locomotive appears and replaces it with an empty one.

Project Gallery: The Cartel Competition

The Micro Model Railroad Cartel is running a fun little competition on their Facebook page to design a halt or flagstop station to fit in one

square foot. There are no prizes, it's just a bit of fun. The deadline is December. Here's a look at the progress of some of the entries so far.



Derek Bolton started with a nondescript piece of foam and is turning it into something narrow gauge



Bob Hughes is creating his layout in On30



For the longest time, your editor had no idea what he was doing. Perhaps On30, or H0. But then he took a total left turn, and decided to plump for familiar 00 scale



Tom Conboy is working on a wintry scene for his On30 entry

Brachty Bridge

Marc Smith's classic storage tote micro

Gauge 00 4mm scale: size 16"x 12"



An urban scene that could be anywhere in England. Except that the “Brains” lettering on the bridge firmly places the layout in Cardiff. A detail like that is important. Change the name on the bridge from “Brains” to “Bass” or “Tetley” and the layout location moves to another part of the country altogether.

Why Brachty Bridge? Fans of classic horror films will no doubt be thinking of something rather different, when reading the word “Brains” on the side of a bridge. But residents of Cardiff recognise it as a local brewery, famous in particular for one ale known as “Brains S.A.” affectionately called “Skull attack”.

As a lad, most of the rail bridges in the area seemed to be emblazoned with a brewery logo. Everywhere I went, I seemed to pass under a bridge advertising beer. So when enjoying a beer in my local, the concept for this scene suddenly came about. See, beer is “thinking juice” after all.

It was 10 or 11 years back, at my first ever

RMweb members day, with another small layout “Hendre Lane” (another exercise in recreating scenes from my youth). Fellow RMweb member and online friend Stu (Stubby) challenged me to build a layout in a small plastic storage box I was using to carry stock. He suggested I complete it by the following year's members day, and I foolishly accepted... foolish because I was already planning another layout, in O gauge. Building a functional layout within a tiny footprint is always going to be a challenge, and within a mere 16' x 12' footprint, even more so.



This fictional scene reminds me of so many urban locations that I've seen in my time

My first thoughts turned to a classic Inglenook, with a small radius point and sector plate. However, I wanted to make use of the crate's height and thoughts turned to embankments and bridges.

This micro was also my first use of insulation board as a track base. Previously, I'd always used more conventional wooden structures. I reasoned that placing the railway on a higher level, and using tall buildings would help hide entry & exit points. I bought a couple of Metcalfe warehouse kits and played with improving window frames and corner stones. I then set about creating the basic track layout on some plain wallpaper.

I didn't want to cram too much trackwork in, and felt I needed to hide the entry points – those holes in the crate where onlookers could see into

the fiddle areas.

It would have been very unusual for a railway to stop just beyond a bridge, and I wanted to include the possibility of trains running through the scene (even if only light engine). Hendre Lane had been my first experimentation with mirrors – to help make the layout appear larger. I decided to use the same trick again, as it had been well received. Many exhibition goers had even commented that they hadn't realised there was even a mirror there! Carefully used, a mirror can help hide baseboard ends, even if only for a few seconds. This can be a real boon for small layouts.



The PECO 'Y' point is a great space saver, and the mirror makes the layout appear larger than it is.

The Peco short radius Y point is the best friend of the OO space starved modeller, and I came across one for sale second hand, unused. A trip to my local model shop Lord & Butler, and I'd bought myself another and a length of Peco flexi track. I already had some offcuts of rail and a variety of spare sleepers to use in the fiddle areas – I wanted to keep costs down, as this wasn't my "proper project" but just a friendly challenge.

Sketching various designs, I came up with this plan, which is really just a crossover employing two points. However, I wanted to do a little shunting, so the rear track on the right hand became the end of a siding, with the other rails all running into the fiddle areas. For true flexibility, this design means I can either run it with a cassette at both ends, or for a brief running session I can just use one cassette on the left hand side. I have an offcut of mirror material which I can fix into place on the right side, to disguise the hole in the crate.

Track, points, and foam insulation board have

already been mentioned. The bridge base was made from thin ply, with the sides employing the usual Wills kit. I printed the Brains logo onto paper and glued it in place, weathering afterwards. I also used ply for my road/ground base and decided to feature a ground level which ran downwards, away from the observer. This also helped add perspective to my backscene. I took photos of houses in the area where my Dad grew up, and printed in several sizes, selecting the ones that looked best. I sparingly used my usual N gauge fine ballast, with rail sides first weathered with aerosol primer and rail-dirt. I like trackside weeds and bushes, and decided to add various scraps a bits & pieces of rusty metal & junk. I also wanted to include some litter in the scene, so I added discarded newspaper etc – it's something we don't see modelled enough, and a common sight in towns and cities, rather than a comment on Cardiff City councils' cleanliness.... Honest.

I used several cars that were around in my 1970's youth and glued a small length of wire into the base of each vehicle to stop them rolling around. This means I can occasionally swap them around to change the scene a little.

Since this layout, I have routinely used foam insulation board as baseboards – it's easy to shape & sculpt, and it keeps weight down. It has always been dimensionally stable, and a tough enough surface once sealed with DAS, PVA and paint etc. I usually build a light batten frame & edges to protect it.

I think it went down well at the following years' members day, although I had foolishly accepted the invitation to take both this and my first O gauge micro layout "Clarboston North" to the same event. Am I a glutton for punishment? Hmm, probably!

Though I built this as a challenge, I got quite a number of invitations, and having exhibited it several times, I think it was fairly successful. I was often told it reminded exhibition goers of central Cardiff streets, and again that they

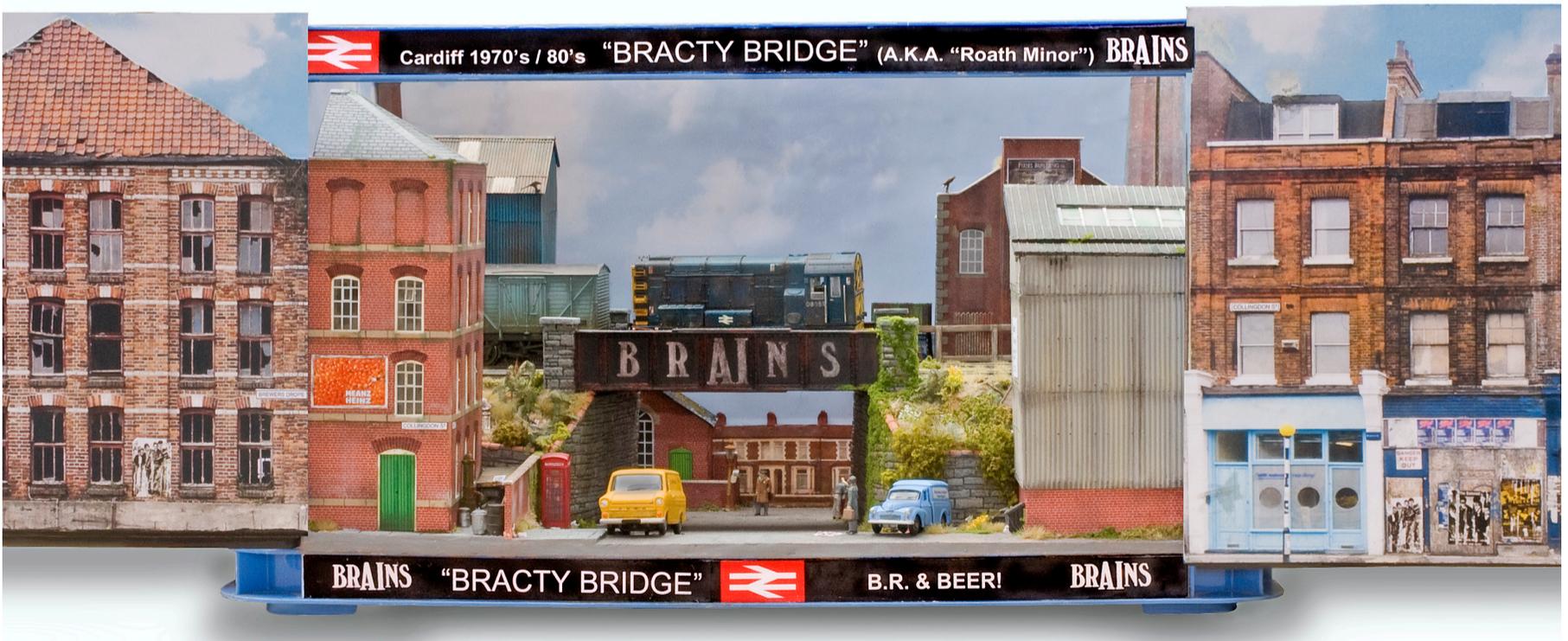
hadn't seen the mirror when first looking at the layout, so it looked bigger than it actually was. Of course, the usual downside of such a diminutive project, is that you can't have trains running all the time, and lots of different manoeuvres – so such a layout isn't everyone's cup of tea (or favourite tippie!). In my original thoughts though, I'd anticipated that one day I might even build another layout in an identical crate, so I could expand it. I have long considered building something modular and expandable. Having built and sold several other layouts, Bracty Bridge is thus far the only one I have actually kept – so maybe there is hope? Though I wouldn't hold your breath, as there are way too many plans & schemes floating around in my..... brains! I enjoyed building and exhibiting Bracty Bridge more than I anticipated, and especially enjoyed chatting to exhibition goers, as I'm always happy to talk about trains. Now, is it subliminal advertising, or do I fancy a pint?



This view perfectly illustrates how the mirror expands the size of Marc's tiny layout



This is it! That's all there is to Brachty Bridge. Cue the remarks saying "So you think that you have no room for a model railway"



How the layout is presented at a show. The building flats that screen the fiddle yards blend in with the layout quite neatly.

Thrubwell Hall Estate Railway *Donald Farnsworth*

Gauge Gn15: size 32" x 17.5". Each layout

I think Carl Arendt's website was where I first encountered Gn15 and his enthusiasm for micro layouts (and my shortage of space) persuaded me to have a go at a small layout in a new scale/gauge combination.

The Thrubwell Hall Estate railway is inspired by the Duke of Westminster's 15" gauge railway built by Sir Arthur Heywood at Eaton Hall near Chester.

The model is built to 1/24th scale running on 16.5mm gauge track. Track work is mostly Peco Set Track with a lot of the sleepers removed and the remaining ones well buried in the ballast. When built both the locos were track powered but since then three radio controlled ones have been added. A slight excess of motive power!



The Yard module

The original part was just the Yard area but a second module, the Sidings, was added quite some time later. Each module is 32" x 17.5" and they were built to fit on a shelf in a piece of

furniture but only one at a time. The modules can be operated independently but there is more fun to be had when they're connected by the short bridge.



The Sidings module



The locomotive “Delta” is seen on the bridge that can be used to join the two individual layouts. A great place for a “roster shot”.

The original home on the shelf is no longer used which has meant I have been able to increase the height of the Yard workshop so the staff can now get inside without banging their heads! The warped cardboard back scenes have also been replaced and raised in height so both modules now match. The back scenes are

printed from photos I’ve taken with some adjustments to get things to match up. The Yard walls are from a photo I took in Venice, SWMBO thought I had lost the plot when I was taking a picture of a “scummy” old wall when there were lots of beautiful buildings all around.



Both the sections of the layout together at a show.



The standard gauge stock in the exchange sidings are held in place by magnets, so can be changed as the mood takes me. It makes you realise just how small the estate stock is.

The Editor says:

Having cut-outs of rolling stock on the background that you can change out to suit different situations? This is a truly outstanding idea! Personally speaking I've never seen this before, and I'm very impressed.

This is Gn15 and a standard gauge G scale coach is huge. What a great way to bring standard gauge stock into a narrow gauge situation.

Kudos to Donald for this idea.



A busy day on the railway. Long trains were not unknown on Estate Railways like Eaton Hall



It seems like there's a lot of barrels ready to go up to the Hall today

There is quite a bit of rolling stock, a mixture of kits and scratch built. The coach, built from card on a bogie well wagon chassis, is a model of one of the Eaton Hall carriages but built as 12 seater rather than a 16 seater as full length would be too long!

This layout wasn't built with exhibiting in mind so operation is quite basic – coupling and point operation via manual intervention and some of the log piles at the front of the Yard are hiding toggle switches for isolating sections.



A lot of lumber has been cut on the estate by the looks of things



A gate through a wall is a natural fiddle yard exit in an estate railway situation.

Brazilian Micro Layout

James Stanford

Gauge H0 3.5mm/ft: size 3'11" x 11.5"

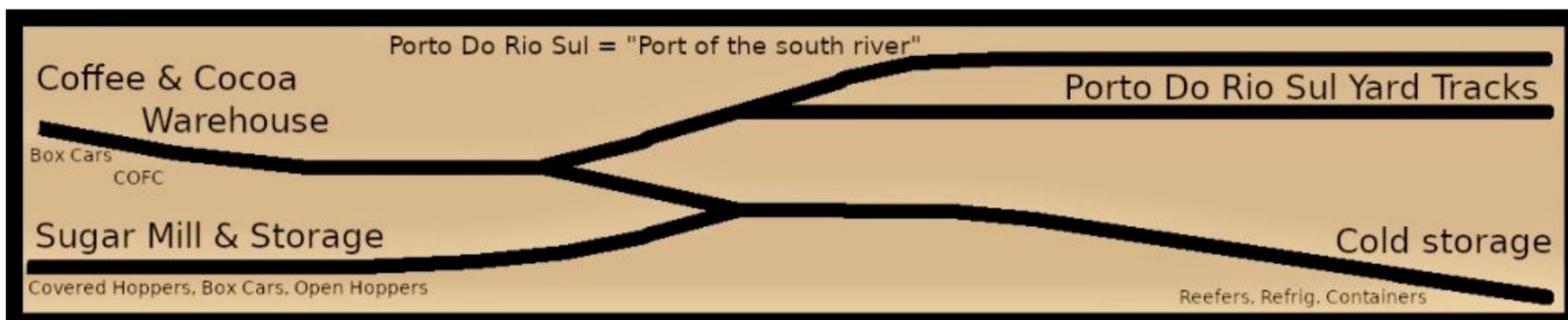


RFFSA Loco shunting the yard

A leftover piece of MDF produced the idea for this layout. My youngest daughter recently acquired a new bunk bed for her room, and wanted a place to do some painting without painting on the walls of her room. My wife purchased a large piece of MDF for that purpose, and had it cut to size at the hardware store. A 1200 x 240mm piece of MDF and a few extra pieces 1200m wide and about 70mm deep, were left over. My wife specifically said to me “can you use these for a model railway?” Of course I can, I thought!

But how to use it? I perused the various eBooks by the late Carl Arendt until I settled on an expanded and customised track plan based on

the “Tramways de Chamies-Les Thurs” track plan in the “Creating Micro Layouts” eBook. That track plan is only about 600mm x 300mm, whereas the track plan I used is 1200 x 240mm. The next thing to do was to decide on a prototype/theme. At first I thought that I would like to do a tram layout based on some models of Melbourne (Victoria, Australia) trams, but cost was prohibitive. After some thinking of possibilities I settled on a Brazilian theme with an RFFSA EMD G22 diesel as motive power. Initially I chose a Brazilian theme because of the lower projected cost of motive power and rolling stock.



The track plan

Not only is this the first Brazilian themed layout I have built, but it is also the first one where I employed multi-use foam board (called XPS insulation board) which is very similar to extruded foam board used in the USA. This layout is a freight switching layout, with a small 2 track yard, the switch back, and various industries on the different legs of the switch back. With the innovation (for me) of a chain switching system, I am able to switch / shunt cars to any spur from the yard.

The scenery on the layout includes palm trees, lots of grass, small bushes, Agave plants (at least that's what I think they look like), a rock face that

slopes away at the front of the layout, a Bamboo cane plantation, and some small hills that help break up the layout into small scenes and hide the train (or part of it) for a while. The scenery has the feel of an almost tropical area with verdant greenery with the XPS foam allowing some features below and above the level of the track.

This layout was quite interesting to build, and I have had a number of operating sessions on the layout. The chain and capstan system adds a level of interest and complexity that can keep the train crew busy for 20 to 30 minutes.



Sugar mill spur with hopper awaiting pick up



The loco eases it way past the rockslide



Some of the layouts tropical foliage



The capstans and chains for switching



Chain switching in progress

Letters to the editor

Some unashamed back slapping, following the opening issues of **The Dispatch**

The Dispatch is a great initiative – thanks for creating it! **SC**

Following the link on NGRM-Online, I have downloaded & read issue 1 of your fab magazine.

I wish you great success with the magazine
Looking forward to issue 2 **BW**

Congratulations on a great first issue of The Dispatch, and I'd like to subscribe please! **PM**

Love the first edition of the magazine please put me on your mailing list. **IL**

I really miss Carl Arendt. **JM**

As a former contributor to Carl Arendt's website, I was delighted to see the high quality of your initial edition: it is a very well produced magazine, both in terms of content and presentation. **KA**

“let us know what you think”

Thank you very much for this excellent magazine Ian. It reminds me of Carl Arendt site's spirit. **FC**

Fantastic first issue! As soon as I saw the layouts you have included it inspired me to plan and build a box file module as a prelude to a larger layout. **RM**

Thanks for this, you have done a great job on the first issue. I like the idea that it covers the micro layout and is not scale specific. It gives all us rubber gaugers some place to hang out. **MM**

Great first issue, really inspired to NOT be an armchair modeller any more, I think I could actually complete 4ft square layout. At least I am going to try. Keep up the great work. **RM**

It's like getting an update from Carl Arendt from years back! **MM**

The editor replies:

I was genuinely floored by your reactions to issue one. I thought that perhaps there was a small gang of micro layout builders who would be interested. The passion in your replies and your encouragement has spurred me on. Actually, it has had a slight negative effect in that you've enthused me in my own layout building so much, I don't know where to channel my energies. Several of you have mentioned Carl and the original website, and I'd like everyone to think of The Dispatch as a development of that. I had always felt that the original website was always short on details. I wanted to know more about the layouts, builders and their inspirations. With the

magazine format you can do that. When you write for The Dispatch, write as much as you want, (I've already had to ask several contributors if they wouldn't mind writing more).

Others have mentioned how they find forums slightly depressing places. People just throw out blunt opinions on models willy nilly, upsetting the layout builder and others. Of course, we welcome opinions here, but as you have to sit down, think, and then write to the editor with your opinion, the chance of offending someone is smaller.

I hope we can all make this a success, and grow the world of Micro Layouts. Thank you all again.

Ian

Fiddle Yard

I've had many requests from people asking me if I'd be interested in featuring their layouts in the pages of **The Dispatch**.

Well, of course I'd be interested!

So I drew up a handy-dandy list of "guidelines" for you all to follow, when submitting articles for publication.

The first one, and this might seem blindingly obvious to most of us, but still needs reiterating is that all layouts **MUST** be under four square feet in area. That's 576 square inches, or .372 square metres.

I shan't exclude you if your layout is 580 square inches, (I'm not that callous), and the .372 square metres might take some time converting to imperial to see it fits.

Carl Arendt established the 4 square feet limit over 20 years ago. The definition has served the hobby well, and I see no reason to change it.

The next most popular question is, "What shall I write?" This is the easiest, and also most difficult question to answer.

Basically write what you like, as much or as little as you feel. If you can put over your enthusiasm for your layout and the micro layout hobby in general, then that's perfect.

I know that some people find it easier to write than others. Just don't worry. If you really struggle, send me an email with pictures and details of your layout. We'll chat about it a bit and then I can piece together a little something for the magazine.

The editor shares some thoughts

Perhaps you are worried about your spelling and grammar? Don't be. I have a couple of people who have volunteered to be proofreaders. (If you ask me, I think they volunteered so they could read the magazine before anyone else). They'll correct any bad spelling and grammar, and you won't even know about it. They correct me, so you clearly have nothing to be concerned about.

I'd also like to get articles about possible prototype locations for micros. A few words and pictures of your own would be great, and if you can knock up a sketch of how you envision the layout, that's even better.

So to photographs. Please, please, **PLEASE**, send me full sized images (jpegs) that I can then crop to fit the space on the page. Not fit the wording around the pictures. One is far, far, easier than the other.

Finally. As you know this is a free magazine, so I can't offer you any financial remuneration for your work.

But, it's quite possible that another model railway magazine editor will see your layout in the pages of **The Dispatch** and get in touch with me. To ask if they can contact you to see if you want to have your layout featured in their magazine. This actually happened after issue 1. So it's very possible.

With that, I thank you for your interest and support for **The Dispatch**. It means a lot. I think Carl would be happy.

With the next issue being planned to come out in time for Christmas. I think It would be great to have some Christmas and winter themed micros in its pages. If you

have anything you'd like to see featured, drop me a line. It would be great to be seasonal. I love Christmas.