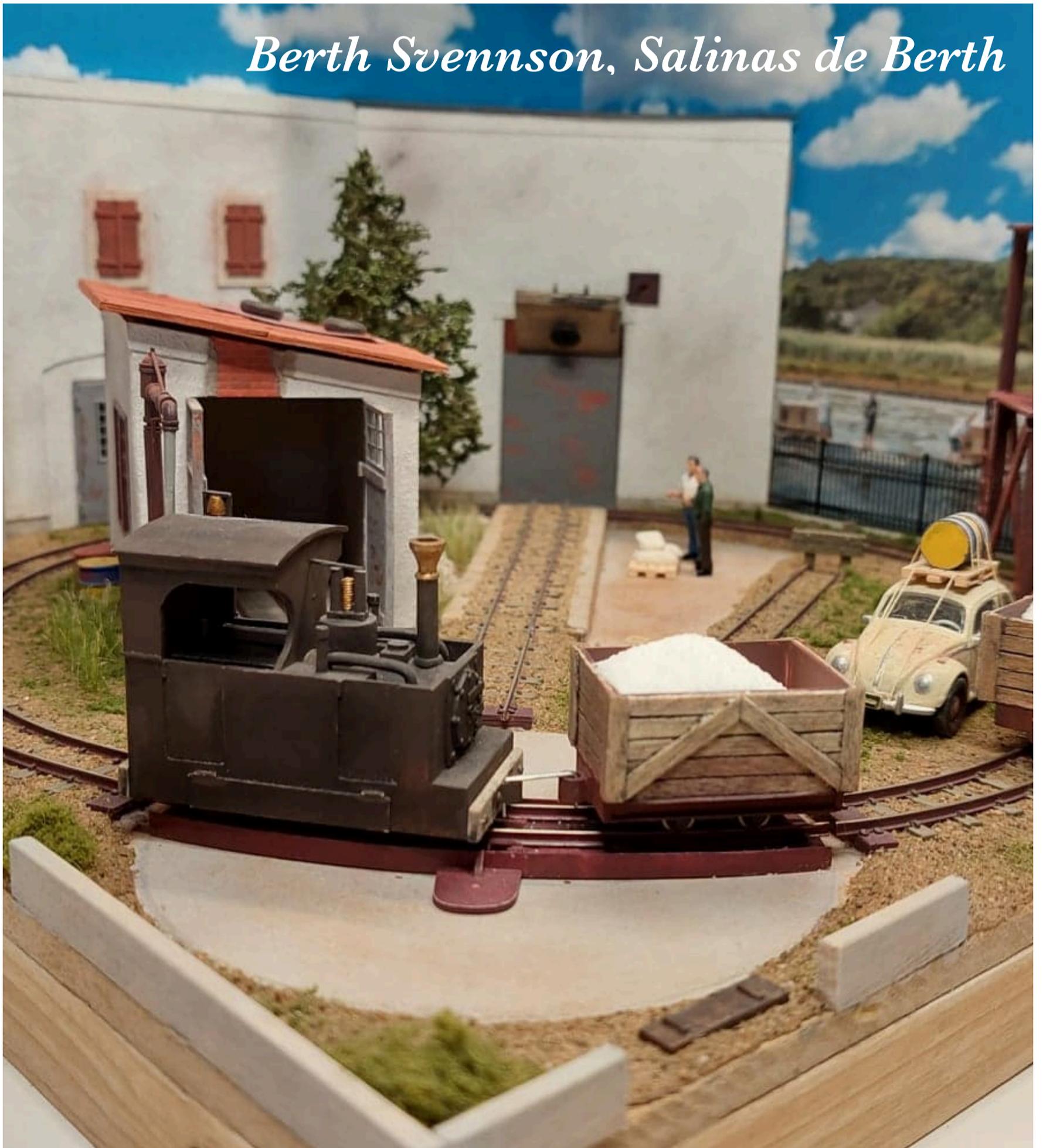


THE MICRO MODEL RAILWAY DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway designer, builder and enthusiast

Issue 4. Summer 2022

Berth Svensson, Salinas de Berth



THE DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway layout designer, builder and enthusiast

I'm sitting here on a transatlantic flight, feeling like a jet setting, important magazine editor working to a tight deadline, typing this. Of course, I'm not one, but I feel like one... Something happened the other day that made me feel very proud. Proud of what **THE DISPATCH**, its readers and contributors have done.

In the pages of the RMWeb forum, I found a thread on a nice little micro, that the builder had started after being inspired by reading an article in a previous issue of **THE DISPATCH**. It's things like that, that really vindicates my decision to start this little journal. People are reading and being inspired. Alex has shared the story of his layout on page 55.

You'll see a new feature in this issue, Bookshelf, in which you, the readers, share the books that you find useful and helpful in your modelling. Please send your book recommendations in. I've also turned over the Fiddle Yard section to Nick Kallis who thinks Micro Layouts could save Model Railroader magazine.

I like to hear and read your opinions about the Micro Layout world, and we can share them in these pages. It would be nice to see **THE DISPATCH** grow into a journal of all aspects of Micro layout building.

If you have a model railway opinion, then I can turn the editorial page over to you. Feel free to get in touch if you'd like to contribute.

You know the address,
MMRDeditor@gmail.com

Contents

Cruden Bay Hotel Tramway	2
<i>Peter Duthie's micro is a slice of history</i>	
Clarbeston North	6
<i>Marc Smith's classic O scale Micro</i>	
BW Hasselhof	9
<i>A boxfile gem from Alan Monk</i>	
3D Perspective Modelling	13
<i>Simon Dawson shares his experiments.</i>	
Das Blumentopfbahn	18
<i>Les Conn encircles a plant pot.</i>	
Letters	21
<i>Some matters arising</i>	
Wrenns Way	23
<i>Alfred Barten's slice of England in the USA</i>	
Wetterau Food Services	27
<i>Tom Conboys tells of his prototype based micro</i>	
McLeod County Co-op	32
<i>Your editor finds a prototype micro location</i>	
Bookshelf	37
<i>What modelling books are on your bookshelf?</i>	
Salinas de Berth	39
<i>Berth Svennson's salty pizza</i>	
Box Metals Revisited	42
<i>Paul Corkrum has a classic boxfile in his possession.</i>	
Brycrug Sidings	44
<i>Andy Biggs' micro slice of North Wales</i>	
Nowhere Road Halt	50
<i>The Editors' entry in the Cartel podcast Christmas challenge.</i>	
The Four Square Foot "Rule"	54
<i>A quick discussion on micro layout size</i>	
ScrapNook	55
<i>Alex Hill was inspired by a layout in THE DISPATCH</i>	
The Garden Railway	60
<i>No room for a railway inn your garden? Then model it.</i>	
Guest Editorial	64
<i>Nick Kallis thinks Micro's can save ModelRailroader</i>	

"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

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Cruden Bay Hotel Tramway

Peter Duthie

TT9 Scale. Size:32" x 18" 810mm x 450mm



A contemporary postcard view of the magnificent hotel building

A reluctance to dispose of my previous work is causing an increasing shortage of space, which in turn drives my interest in micro-layouts and dioramas, generally representing obscure narrow gauge electric systems. Using 9mm or 16.5mm gauge track and mechanisms helps to keep costs down, while 3D printing enables me to use less usual scales. Cruden Bay is 1:100 scale using 9mm gauge track, hence TT9, a useful combination which I have used for several models.

The prototype for this layout is the GNSR golf hotel in north east Scotland, which was linked to the station by a 500 metre 3' 6" gauge electric tramway. The two distinctive Kittybrewster-built single deck trams with their extended platforms carried guests encumbered by golfing kit. They also transferred laundry baskets from across the parent system to a central laundry behind the hotel. Coal and general provisions

were carried in appropriate wagons hauled by the trams. Passenger services ceased in 1932, and having been requisitioned during WW2 the pink granite building was sadly demolished in 1947. A reconstructed tram has been preserved at the Grampian Transport Museum, providing an original for my simplified models.

Enough of the full sized version - this layout is 32x18" to fit an available shelf – equivalent to four square feet. Insulation foam provides an economical, rigid, lightweight base which can be carved to represent contours, though the 2" thickness complicates wiring. Shaping foam with knives can be a messy process, and it is best not to breathe the resulting dust. Multiple layers can be joined using PVA glue – other adhesives may dissolve the foam. Here the natural colour of the foam is rather suited to the sandy golf links original, though it has since oxidised to a darker yellow.

Commercial grass tufts were used on the dunes and static grass was applied elsewhere. That old favourite lichen was used for the gorse around the hill, so common in Scotland. The track arrangement was loosely based on Ordnance Survey 1:2500 mapping, though the triangle was omitted to save space. The Peco N gauge track is mostly buried using filler, another messy process – I would probably take a different

approach in the future. The GNSR used wagon/tram turntables, which I have represented using a simple powered display turntable to access the tramshed tracks, though it is longer than the OS maps suggests it should be.



This view shows the tramway fleet with the laundry, chimney, turntable and tramshed below the folly perched on the hill above.

I considered radio control for the trams using miniature Deltang receivers, but the cost put me off at the time, given I am more of a 'maker' than an 'operator', and parts now seem to be in short supply. As a result, electrical connections were something of an afterthought, and isolation simply uses the Setrack points. Buildings were assembled from parts designed on the computer and 3D printed on my well-used filament printer, and include a satisfyingly chunky version of the crow-stepped and turreted baronial hotel frontage, the laundry block with its chimney, the tramshed, and the folly on the hill – the folly original is from the

area but is not quite so close. These have been based on photographs of the prototypes where I could find them on the web. Information on the tramshed was sparse, limited to an aerial photo with the building in shade, so that is largely based on similar structures elsewhere. The two 3D printed trams run on the economical Kato 'Pocketline' four-wheel chassis. Over the last few years I have designed and printed more than 100 different narrow gauge electric loco models, often with rolling stock to match, and sometimes with micro-layouts for them to live on. However, unlike these trams, most are static.



The front of the hotel, with a tram arriving from the station. In reality, the hotel building was much deeper, but this is already a large building for a micro-layout.

Printed parts are cleaned up, painted with acrylics and assembled using superglue. Several iterations were required before I was happy with the tram design, using flat-printed railings, a cocktail stick trolley pole topped by a violin-string end trolley wheel and inkjet printed lettering on the side panels. The hotel tramway wagons, by contrast, were adapted from very old

N gauge models dating from the early seventies. I experimented with very small cylindrical magnets as couplers, given that long trains were not needed, and vehicles would not be reversed, but that was not entirely successful, still requiring the 'shunting pole from the sky'. 3D printing also provided a selection of baskets for all that laundry.

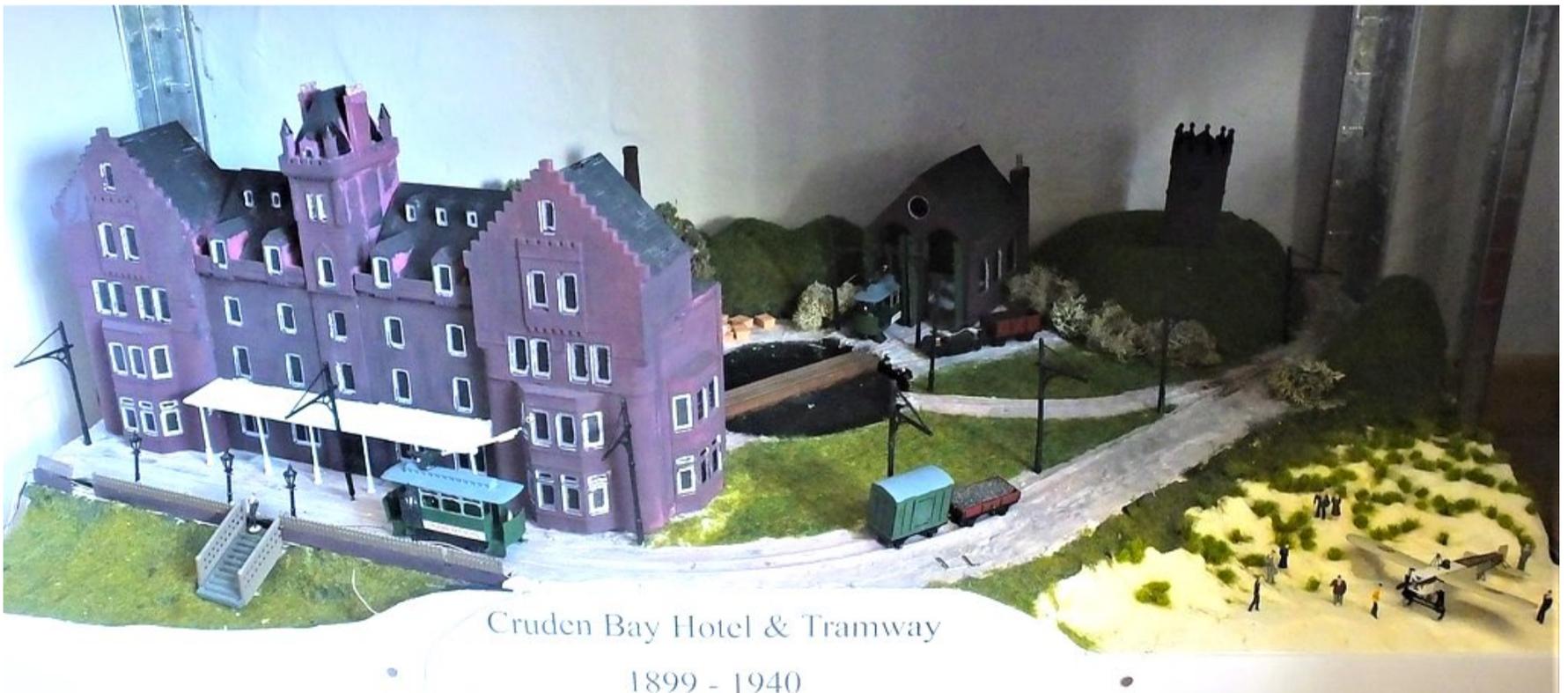
Peter Duthie

While I dabbled in British outline OO gauge in the sixties and N in the seventies, the rest of the 20th century was taken up by other activities, mainly outdoors. After moving to a larger house in Cambridgeshire, UK, I returned to modelling about ten years ago, with a model of Fort

William and Banavie set in the sixties taking up much of the third bedroom. Thereafter, lack of space meant that micros became the order of the day. A 3D printer provided a route into modelling obscure prototypes in a variety of scales and gauges, with a focus on narrow gauge electric railways. With nearly 200 mainly static locos designed and printed and over twenty micros and dioramas of varying scope and quality now built, I have hopefully learned a little more, but struggle for space. Perhaps the outdoors was a better idea



A historic cameo features on the beach. It recreates the first airplane flight across the North Sea. On On 30 July 1914, Tryggve Gran flew from The Bay Hotel in his Bleriot XI-2, landing near Stavanger, Norway.



An overall shot after the overhead power standards had been printed and planted and additional lamps provided to illuminate those steps. I chose not to string the overhead 'wire', as it would probably have appeared too heavy, and impeded access for operation. Pickup is strictly two- rail

Clarbeston North

Marc Smith

O scale: 1:48. Size: 40" x 18" 930mm x 450mm

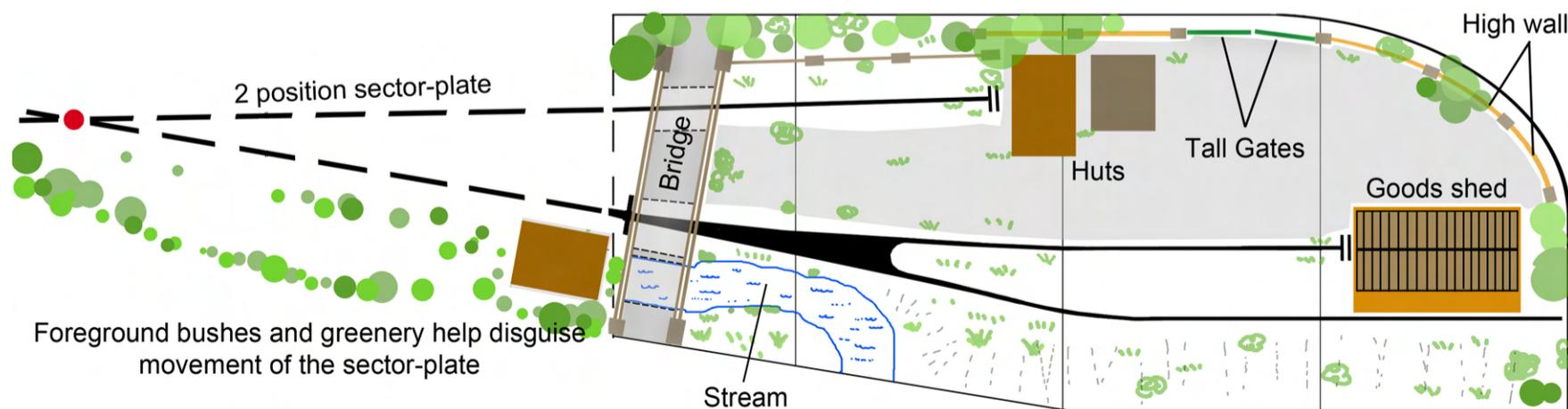


The layout is meant for small locos and wagons, the Hymek is a little out of place. But doesn't overpower the model

In his book on **Finescale layouts in small spaces** (an essential read IMHO), Iain Rice discusses the positives of employing sector plates, but observes that proportionately you lose a relatively large chunk of scenic area. I think he has a point here, so I set about the task of building a small layout to experiment with a scenic sector plate.

Many layouts feature scenery which extends beyond the bridge or other scenic break. This is

sometimes a warehouse or large building and sometimes countryside or trees. However, I didn't want the train to disappear completely from view, and to extend the scenic area. I had several ideas, including a foreground embankment which obscured the bottom half of the train, or a quayside with crates and piles of timber – so you would only see the top portion of the train while it ran on the sector plate.



A very simple track plan



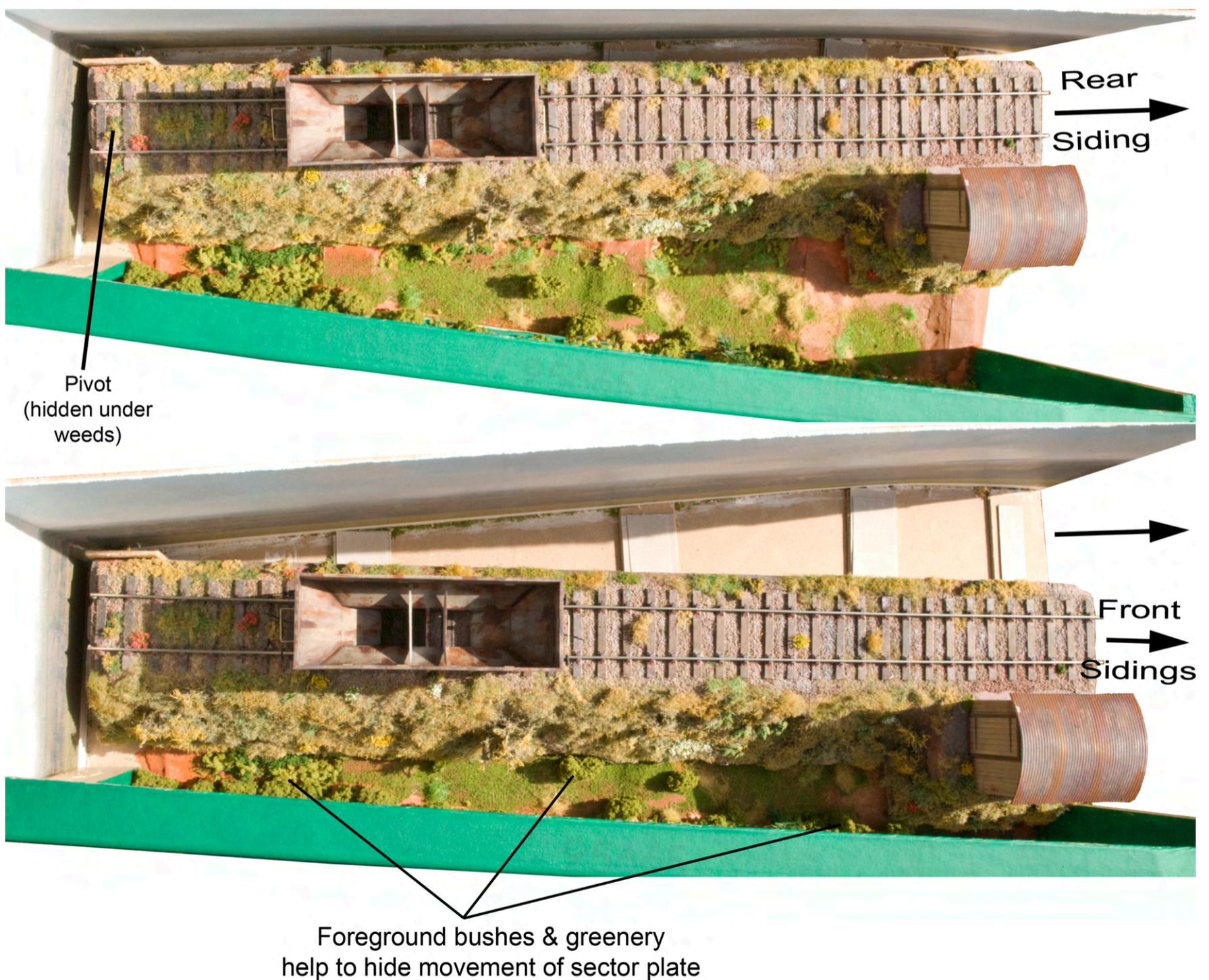
At the time, I was also building, painting & weathering several items of rolling stock, and wanted somewhere to photograph these – preferably something small & lightweight - something I could just take out to the garden to get some “natural-light” photos. I planned an Inglenook-type layout so I could do some shunting with my new stock. I decided

to employ a sector plate to save space and just use one point. O Gauge points are big! The resulting layout “Clarbeston North” was around just 3’6” and the sector plate was just over 2 feet. (A small area for a 7mm scale layout).



Having toyed with various view-blockers, I opted to keep the sector plate as a scenic embankment. I built a frame around it and put some greenery and a hut in the foreground, to at least partially disguise the movement. Yes, an onlooker would see the end of the embankment sliding back & forth if they were looking – but I would sneakily do this while they were watching a shunting manoeuvre on the main layout board. The layout was built on foam insulation board, supported by PVA glued battens, and framed with hardboard. The sector-plate embankment just used a screw as pivot and was

moved with a piece of rail glued to it, for almost hands-free operation. I think it was partly successful, I felt that I definitely didn't "lose" that scenic area, but you couldn't get away from the fact that you could see the embankment and the train on it, sliding back & forth (even if just a little). It could work better still with high piles of crates, logs & barrels on the floor in the foreground – perhaps observers wouldn't notice the train moving quite so easily? I still feel that it helped add visual interest and scenic detail – perhaps I should try another technique.



BW Hasselhöf

Alan Monk

H0 scale. Boxfile: 14.25" x 10.5" 360mm x 266mm



I find it difficult to believe this is build in a boxfile

This started off as one of those 5am brainwaves the morning of the annual informal summer get-together of a bunch of railway-modelling friends.

In the longer-term, I have a Epoch IV DR (Deutsche Reichsbahn, the pre-reunification East German Railway) H0 station layout under build, but I felt a smaller project would help refresh my long-dormant layout building skills and 'scratch that itch' of having a growing collection of DR locos and stock with nothing to run on until the larger layout is more complete. The brainwave was inspired by some of the photos of shedded steam and diesel locos I'd taken during a week-long spotting trip to the former East Germany in August 1994 – I'd been sorting these for scanning and publication via my Flickr site.

I quickly pulled an empty foolscap boxfile off my storage shelves and found some off-cuts of Peco Code 75 track which were arranged as if leading off a turntable to a roundhouse, and placed a selection of locos and some of the

photos to give some confirmation that the idea would work and what it might look like. Bw Hasselhöf was born. (Hasselhof Ost being the name of the larger layout – cheesy I know, but I like it!) Bw is shorthand for Bahnbetriebswerk or locoshed. A Ringlokschuppen is a roundhouse (either full or partial).



Early design work



Compare this view of the model with a real loco depot below

Feedback from the friends who saw the embryonic diorama later that day seemed positive, so the idea was developed, adjusted and finalised over the following weeks and various necessary kits and bits obtained for a proper start to be made.

One end and side of the boxfile were cut down to provide better viewing angles and the track base raised by 2 layers of 5mm foamboard. This allowed for the turntable pit to be modelled and an Auhagen inspection pit to be installed. Thick card was used to further raise the ground level either side of the fan of track up to sleeper level and this was covered in printed concrete slabs, taken from an image downloaded from the web. The track fan was ballasted with 'fine ash' ballast and secured with Kleer floor polish, followed by some weathering and the 'planting' of some 'weeds'.

The roundhouse frontage and the low-relief backscene building came from a modified Kibri 39452 3-stall roundhouse kit (the main expenditure on the diorama). Both are detachable and sit within the closed boxfile for safe transport. The shed doors are moveable

open or closed. The middle shed stall has the end section (bonnet nose and bufferbeam) of an old, broken Gützold V100 (Ost) diesel attached to the back wall to provide the illusion of the shed being occupied.



Looking at this picture of a prototype location, Alan has nailed the feel and atmosphere perfectly



A 'fiddlestick' (below) acts as the turntable bridge – this sits on the part-circle of rail in the turntable pit, which (luckily) matches the rail levels perfectly. In time, the fiddlestick will be dressed and detailed with operators hut and handrails to better represent a turntable. The

fiddlestick is wired to a controller allowing locos to be driven on or off shed, electrical and alignment connection to the shed roads being via standard fishplates soldered to the fiddlestick rails.





There are still a few minor detailing jobs to do, mostly the typical loco shed detritus (oil drums, brake blocks, tools, etc) and a figure or two. There is space to park a Trabant and/or a suitable lorry by the rear building flat to add some GDR flavour for when the shed roads are empty.

Overall a fun, cheap and quick project to do – total cost was just under £40 (mostly the shed kit, but including the approx cost of the various things like track, foamboard, etc that I already had to hand) and the total build time was about

25 hours. And, at only 36cm x 27cm, it really doesn't take up much space.

While I chose a roundhouse for my project, other boxfile diorama possibilities include a small goods shed or yard for shuffling some Güterwagen around with a Köf or a straight-road loco stabling yard fed via a traverser deck. I saw such an arrangement at Bw Berlin Ostbahnhof, where Eloks were moved on and off the traverser by an ASF battery tractor (the traverser and stabling roads being non-electrified). Indeed, one could have a bookshelf full of different mini-layout dioramas!



Alan Monk

I've been playing toy trains for about 45 of my 54 years now. Started with a Hornby OO train set and over the years I've covered British in N, H0, OO, EM and O, Welsh in 009, Czechia in TT, and the US and East Germany in H0. Very brief dabbles in 2mm finescale and P4. A serial builder of exhibitable micros, with 4 complete and plans/stock/material for at least 5 or 6 more micros, plus a couple of boxfiles, and I'm still finding subjects that I think 'Oh...that would make a good micro layout, what stock can I make/adapt/buy?' I've organised over a dozen successful exhibitions for 2 societies and my local club. I work full-time for London Underground as a staff scheduler, but am looking forward to retirement in a couple of years. I'm also quite involved in the UK Steampunk scene with my partner Shelley.

3D Perspective Modelling

Simon Dawson

Thoughts about perspective modelling for Micro Layouts

There has been quite a lot of interest in using forced 3D perspective in model railways. Many are simply including models of different scales, but as a fan of the work of Jack Nelson many years ago, I thought much more could be achieved now.

A few years ago I had the chance of looking closely at one of the dioramas created by Jack Nelson. Not only do the models get smaller the further back they are, but they are 'distorted' to enhance the forced perspective. It isn't an exact science, but if it looks right then it is right, and sets up the optical illusion.

Forced perspective is something I had wanted to try, especially now that I had thought it might be possible with the help of 3D CAD and 3D printing.

I decided to jump in at the deep end and create a row of brick terraced houses, with the scale changing along the length of the row. One end of each house would be smaller than the other. As I model in a variety of scales including OO and HO, I started by opting for a scale change of 1/87 from one house to the next. Strictly speaking I should have used 1/87.5 as this was the difference between OO and HO, but once I had started I continued with using 1/87. As it happens this worked out OK.

The first house has one end at 1/76 scale, the other end 1/87 scale.

The second house starts at 1/87 scale, the other end is 1/100, then 1/100 to 1/115, 1/115 to 1/132, and finally 1/132 to 1/152 which is near enough N scale.

It is not just a simple case of rescaling, there are two other things to consider. As height reducing the further back you go, there also has to be a base line which stays at same level. I set this as the top of the house roof. It just seemed right, and once set I would have to stick with that height for all displays. The second was deciding

whether to use the front of the house as a base plane. I did this with the houses and shops, and angled the back walls inwards. This was initially done to make transition from 3D perspective to full 3D easier, but made it more difficult to create non low relief buildings so all subsequent designs set the back of building as base plane.

The church was done this way, using the centre line of the building as the base plane.

Now it was one thing designing buildings, it was another working out how much space would be needed for the complete display. I created a spreadsheet with all the calculations, so I now just have to decide start and end scales, and it does all the work. It also helps me decide if it is practical. OO to N only requires a back to front depth of about 30cm. As front scale goes up, so does the increased depth, so O down to HO requires about 40cm. Ideally I would also increase width of display as well.

One advantage of 3D CAD and 3D printing is that once you have a design it is relatively easy to change scale of it, and this is what I did to create the terraced houses. Some adjustment has to be made to prevent walls and edges being too thick. Rows of bricks would reduce in height along length of each house, but I kept brick length to a standard length, and only adjusted to fit door and window openings. I also used Flemish bond to make it more realistic.



Simon's first perspective model.

The 3D printed terrace looks good, a couple of small issues, but good enough. Next I designed the backs of the houses, which was a bit more difficult, and in the end decided not to use in my new display. I decided a row of shops, based on the terraced house design would be more interesting. Various shop fronts were done, and a variety used to complete the terrace. They were also then mirrored to create the other side of the street. As the street is not very wide, I decided something should fit in the wider space available, so using the Hornby (ex Triang) model church I designed a fully 3D perspective church building. The terraced houses had only been done with one side in perspective, the church would have both sides in perspective. In practice much of the design for both sides was mirrored, but there was still some detail that was only on one side. As the church would be set back from the front edge, its scale would reflect that and it had a front edge of 1/100 scale and rear of

1/152 scale.

Now I could start putting it all together.

I wanted the diorama to be working, and would also have lighting, both in buildings and in the street.

I wanted to use a Hornby 3 arch viaduct at the front. This determined the width, and at the back I would create a smaller scale version for N scale. The width at the back would therefore be approximately half that of the front. There would also be a datum line to consider, and I used the top of the roof of the terraced houses. This would mean the road would actually rise as it progressed towards the rear. The road rises 13mm one end of the house to the next, and progressively less as the scale reduces. I had decided to create a row of 6 houses (5 would have been enough as it happens), and this resulted in the road rising approximately 56mm.

Fixtures and fittings such as cars, street furniture and people would be selected to suitable scales and positioned in a way that their lack of individual perspective did not look out of place. This was to be the first of several modules, each with a different theme. Each would have a track at front(OO) and back(N), with a train running back and forth on each. I also wanted to experiment with track and railway stock running front to back(static), but incorporating forced perspective. I started with a simple wagon and this worked out OK.

The wagons would form an important part of my second module, a dockside scene. The third module would feature a station running front to back, with at least one railway coach on it. As it happens the original scale change I selected for the terraced houses also worked well with railway wagons and coaches. Each house was a 'scale' 15ft, and so I made wagons, including buffers, this length, and coaches would be a multiple of this.



This view of Simon's second display shows well the effect of the forced perspective.



Simon's first module is seen here at an exhibition in Blackburn in January 2020, complete with a false wall. The second module was also on display, but non working, allowing visitors to look at it closer.

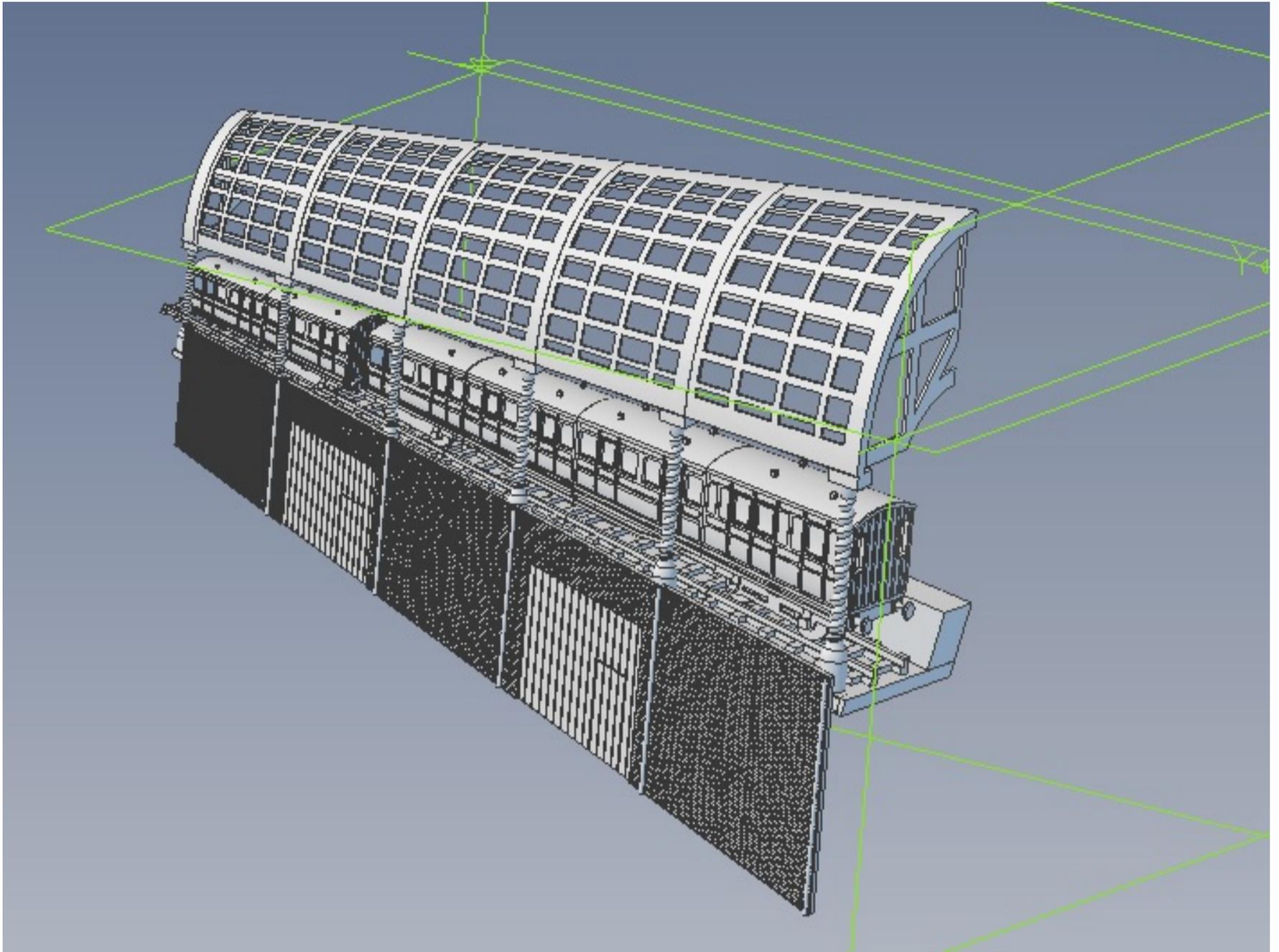
Since then, work has started on the third module, which is inspired by the Liverpool waterside, It will feature a Liverpool Overhead Railway train in N scale at back and an OO dockside tramway at front. It also features a set of 3D perspective coaches in a station. The station is set at what would be road level, and is lowered to basement level, down to the dockside tramway at front. . To make it more portable I have built it using Lever Arch files which all pack away easily(hopefully). Box-files might have been easier to use in this case, but I already had the Lever Arch files.

Not all the buildings are 3D printed in this case, partly because of the cost. The road surface is cobbled, but I just did a 2D print on sealed thin card and stuck this down. A wash of my preferred paint wash gunk(from cleaning brushes in jar of water). It does not quite have the look of a full 3D printed surface, but I think looks OK as it is more like background. I also intend to make some of the walls using traditional card stones cut out and covered with thick paint/plaster. Stone was often used as basement walls at start of Industrial revolution. For future projects I am considering forced

perspective with bigger scales. Using a wide range of scales would still use up a lot of space, but there are plenty of options using a smaller change of scale overall.

Why stick to just one scale when you can have fun using more than one?

This project started as a plan to use 3D printing, but as time has gone on, I have tried other ideas such as the cobbled street. For complex structures, 3D printing still makes sense, as do some brick buildings. But for smooth walled buildings as I would use in a French themed display, I will just get the doors, windows and possibly roofs 3D printed. I am also interested in trying out more railway coach or wagon designs, possibly even road vehicles. For something like a car, it would need careful slicing of the design then reassembling it digitally. In theory possibly, but it would not be a speedy task! For smaller scales I am not sure of its advantage, but in a larger scale might be worth it.



Early design work for Simon's third perspective module inspired by the Liverpool Overhead Railway

Finally, I am cheating slightly with perspective, but the overall effect works I think. I could design buildings with bricks and tiles that progressively get smaller in all angles, but that would be far too complex, so I decided to just do enough by skipping some reductions(eg brick length) over each section, with next section starting at reduced scale. As the lines of bricks and tiles still line up , it works out OK. As with

some other 'illusions' our brains seem to compensate.

3D perspective displays have been around for a long time. Often found in museums, less common in model railways. Hopefully I have shown how the ideas Jack Nelson used have been adapted in the 21st century, and maybe inspire others to have a go.

Die Blumentopfbahn.

Les Conn

A micro around a plant pot Scale 4mm:1 ft 009 10" dia circle



A while ago I went through a phase of building pizza layouts. This wee one and one other – “Charlie the Choo Choo”, in Gnine are finished and operational; one more “Santa Clarita and Los Zapatos” also Gnine, and “Underground / Overground”, probably Gn15 and nothing to do with the Wombles, are both under way and a pile of timber respectively. I ended up with a 10” or so circle of MDF as an offcut, and wondered if there would be a tiny micro pizza in there somewhere. I’d nothing to use as a base, but found a plastic flowerpot to

act as a stand and also to hide the controls in. As the layout was to be set somewhere quiet on the Dutch / German border, I used the German word for a flowerpot – blumentopf – and called it Das Blumentopfbahn. The chosen scale was H0e, just because I’d never built anything in H0 before.

The controller is mounted on an 20mm MDF disk held inside the base of the flowerpot, with the speed control, direction switch and power in sockets fitted into the rim. Power is DC, with an

Ebay / Chinese speed control module providing control.

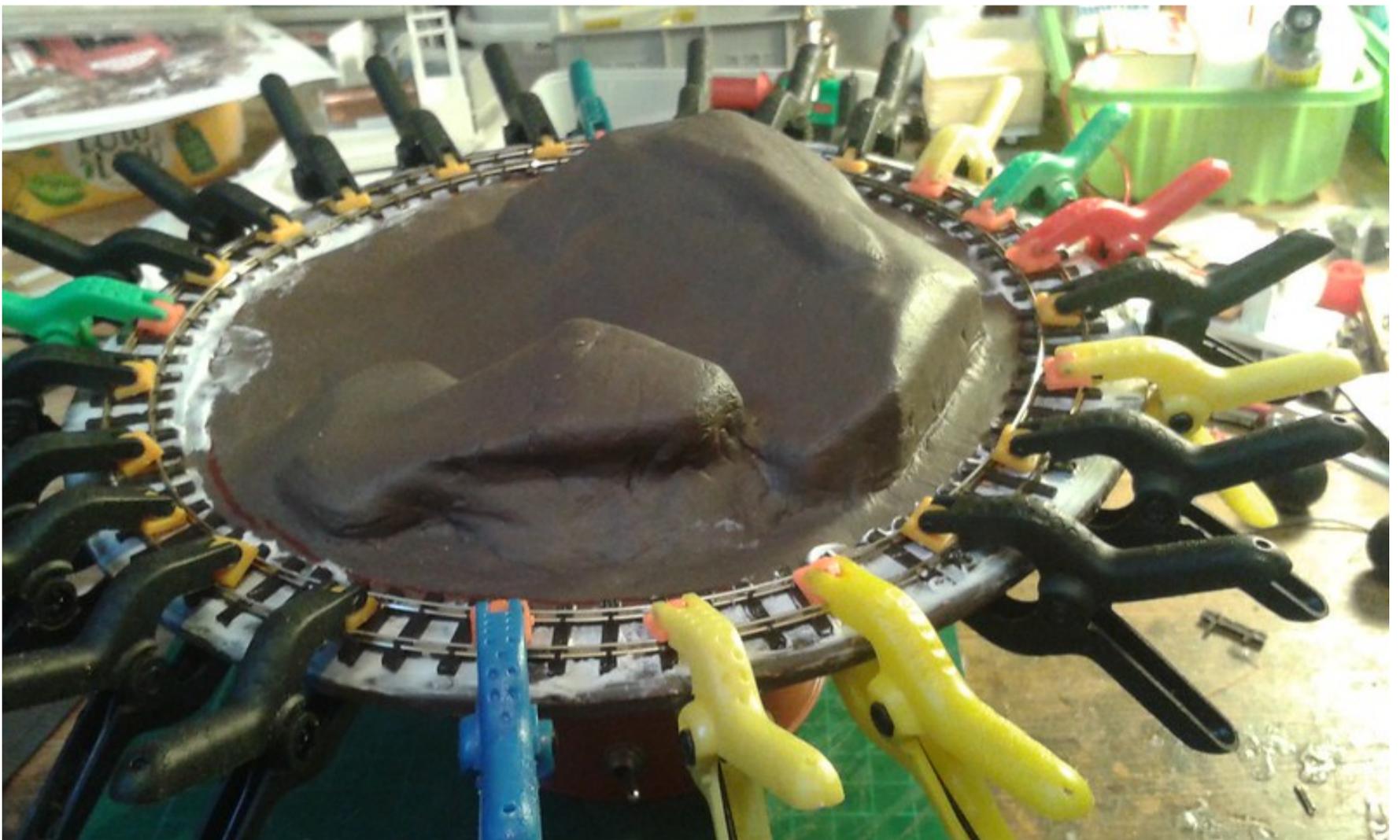


The track is a circle of Peco 009, bent to 4 1/2" radius using a homemade rail bender, with the joints staggered to avoid kinks. Power is supplied via wires soldered to the underneath of the rail joiners. The side of the rails were painted with a rusty colour and once laid it was ballasted and an ungated crossing made to get across into the middle of the layout.

The very basic contours are made from extruded yellow foam covered in Das clay, then painted brown and further covered in scatter and static grass. I added a Faller barn, some tools and a Merit (?) horse. The train goes behind the small hill then reappears, not much of a scenic break but good enough given the size of the layout.



The controller is built into the plant pot base



The track is held in place with clamps while the glue sets

Letters

Got something to say? Get in touch.

Boxfiles and Fiddlesticks

Belated thanks for the Spring issue of The Dispatch. Have also checked the new website, great stuff!

Just one teeny error in the Fiddlestick article re the one I made for my boxfile layout, it didn't have fishplates to connect it to the boxfile track, but short lengths of brass rod soldered to the outside web of each rail, which simply slid to the outside web of the rails on the boxfile. The rod could be bent slightly to introduce a bit of tension, and maintain positive connection for the electrical supply, as the feed was at the other end of the fiddlestick; there was no wiring on the boxfile at all.

Possibly I didn't explain things fully before, my fault sorry. I thought that fishplates can work loose over time.

Jordan Foster



A close up of Jordan's fiddlestick to layout connection



A change of scale in a beer crate.

This is Glen Road, a pizza layout in Sn3½. Following the craze of layouts in containers, this is in a beer crate. Was once actually Gn15, but I got the little shunting tractor at an estate sale, so converted the layout by changing the buildings with some of my Convention award winning ones. The backscene is particularly effective, it's

the page from a calender. Layout is just under a square foot. In its old form, it appeared in Carl's Scrapbook.

Gavin Sowry

THE DISPATCH inspires...

Last night I stumbled across your journal on RMWeb and I had a read of Issue 1. How fascinating it was and I congratulate you on the results of your labours. I will definitely be buying you some coffee!

I have, inadvertently, started an 009 layout that I believe would qualify as micro-layout. I say inadvertently as it is based around an old shelf that I had lying around (layout size was purely dictated by that) and some MDF that I had. It is not intended to be anything other than a bit of fun to build and operate, certainly not representative of any prototype or prototypical operation.

Track is all Peco and the structures will mostly be card built using Scalerscenes models adapted as needed. Control is DCC and the points are

operated by servos. Progress is slow owing to work commitments but this is the current state of play:

It has a scenic area of 302 square inches and a fiddle yard stick that may be plugged in - well it will have when I get round to building it! There will be a bridge that spans the layout just right of the fiddle yard entry, it is intended that this will be part brick, part steel.

Next tasks are the backscene and to carve away some of the cork base (it is 18mm thick) so that it is less flat, then onto the rest of the scenic work and ballasting. I don't intend to have too many structures as like to have an "open feel".

Roy Langridge



The start of Roy's layout. We look forward to seeing it when it's finished.

Wrenns Way

Alfred Barten

Scale : 00 4mm:ft. Size 12" x 26" 305mm x 915mm



Does anyone remember the Alec Guinness movie "The Horse's Mouth?" He's an eccentric painter who gets the urge to paint murals whenever he sees a large vertical surface. In the final episode he is seen lining up a huge freighter leaving port.

I have a similar urge, but it's wanting to build a train layout whenever I see a flat, horizontal surface, particularly one that is modest in size like a table top, drawing board, shelf, file box, or even a jewelry box. The more ready for use the surface is, the better. I stopped building freestanding, framed layouts years ago because I could never get them finished, and they do take up a lot of space. Now, in my elder years (82), smaller is better. Everything is done at my desk. Wrenns Way is my first UK-inspired layout, an OO gauge Inglenook style shunter built on a 12"x36" Rubbermaid shelf I picked up at Lowe's for under \$10. What got me started on this particular layout was seeing YouTube

episodes in which uncoupling devices made from clear plastic were placed between the rails and successfully lifted the coupling hooks. UK trains also have the advantage of many tank locos and 4-wheel wagons being readily available. In the States, Class 1 railroads did not use 4-wheel wagons, and tank locos were only used on a few commuter lines.

I put stick-on rubber feet under the shelf to give some space for wires. I then painted the top surface brown and put down some 1/8"x1" wood strips for the track. Rather than mess with plaster, I used sheet cobblestone to cover the ground. I used two Hornby points and later added a Peco. At the time I was not thinking about insul- vs electro-frogs. My bigger concern was geometry, and the Hornby worked better for me. Too bad. The electro-frogs are more reliable for slow speed shunting.



As often happens, the layout evolved as I built it. I added the reverse leg siding (by the coaling station), forcing me to use two locos in place of one. I also added storage cartridges to one of the sidings, so I could bring in new, and remove old wagons. I now have five, each holding three wagons. These cartridges are made from bamboo drawer organizers I bought at Bed, Bath and Beyond. They are connected electrically by alligator clips, and fit snug against the main layout with blocks on either side to ensure alignment. I later extended the head shunt at the other end enough to qualify the layout as a full fledged Inglenook. It is removable.

The buildings are mostly scratch built, and the rolling stock RTR off-the-shelf. The buildings along the perimeter are backed by 1/8" plywood and kept low. I want to be able to store the layout on a shelf, and may need to place a cover over it or even stack something on it. So strength is important here.

This being my first UK-based venture, I learned

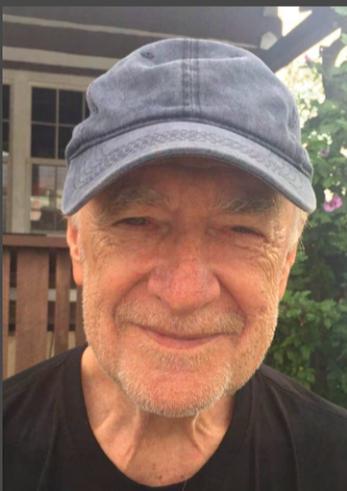
a lot. Aside from the type of points, the most important thing was the inconsistency of the couplings. They don't all line up or work flawlessly. One strategy is to use a single manufacturer. I found used Wrenns to be very good, hence the name of the layout. Not all of my rolling stock are Wrenns, but many are. Each wagon is tested, adjusted if possible, and placed in active duty or retired. In the end, I gave up on the plastic lifting devices because they would have been all over the place. I fashioned a simple hockey stick shape from an old credit card and use that to get under the coupling hooks.

I'm using a Marklin Mini Club (Z gauge) controller. It works very well and controls the direction simply by the position of the controlling knob, which I like for shunting. I should note that I also tried using a Marklin (I have three) with an 009 layout and burned out a Kato drive chassis when I cranked the speed up. I now use Rokuhan controllers for my 009 layouts (future articles).



A good close-up view of Alfred's fiddle yard cassette arrangement





Alfred Barten

I've been a rail nut since I saw my first electric train at a classmate's birthday party when I was about seven. That was in 1947 and led to my extensive lobbying for a train set, which materialized the following Christmas as an American Flyer set. My involvement has since then waxed and waned according to my job and family commitments, but I never strayed far. As an architect turned tech writer, I managed get a few articles published in *Railfan & Railroad*,

Railroad Model Craftsman, *Electric Lines* and *Locomotive & Railway Preservation*. I also helped found the Shelburne Trolley Museum in Shelburne Falls, MA.

I've modeled railways in O, S, OO, 009, HO, TT3, N, and Z. I published an online ezine on virtual railroading called *Virtual Railroader* and a CD book, *This is V-Scale*. This led to my being commissioned by Auran, creator of Trainz, to photograph the entire Metro North Harlem Line from Grand Central Terminal to Wassaic so they could build a simulation. It was included in the Trainz 2006 edition.

My current interest is compact layouts, particularly ones that can be easily stored. Compact layouts can be finished in a relatively short amount of time and offer a chance to try new ideas and new scales or themes. In this past year I've built compact layouts in OO, 009, HOe, and am completing one in TT3.

Wetterau Food Services

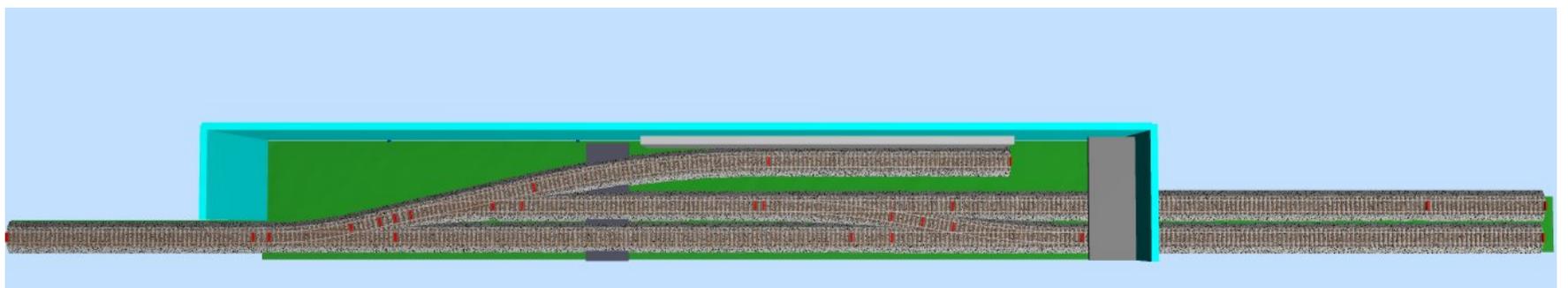
Tom Conboy

H0scale. Size: 4' x 11" 1200mm x 275mm



Inspiration for the WFS Micro comes from two sources, Bob Hughes's San Vince de Ray N scale layout and Professor Klyzlr's advocacy of using foamcore for baseboards. Bob's 3-2-2 Inglenook was a major influence for me wanting to build a micro, and it's still one of my all-time favorite micro layouts. You can also count me as one of Professor Klyzlr's "foamcore disciples" as I have personally discovered the advantages, challenges, and joys of using foamcore as a baseboard material. The foamcore clipboard method has withstood the test of time on the WFS with minimal warping and no failures of the glue joints on the layout. I highly recommend foamcore as a baseboard material! I wanted to build a layout to take to train exhibitions, and I also wanted to try building something based on a prototype. The WFS Micro is a representation of a grocery distribution warehouse that was located in Desloge, Missouri. The WFS warehouse was

situated on a siding connected to the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Union Pacific now operates the rail line running through Desloge. The warehouse building still exists, but it is no longer a grocery distributor and receives no rail service. The track arrangement follows the prototype, although it is greatly compressed. The main feature of the layout is the warehouse along with its siding. The building is also compressed with the exclusion of a loading dock, but the inclusion of three doors for receiving goods. My research into Wetterau Foods never yielded any results for what type of goods were actually received, but further research into grocery distribution warehouses gave me a general idea. The two main baseboard dimensions are 7.5 inches wide by 54 inches long. The left tail track section is 2 inches wide by 16 inches long and the right staging/fiddle tracks section is 3.5 inches wide by 28 inches long. Total layout size is 535 square inches.





I have allocated doors one and two for receiving dry goods and various sundries needed for grocery stores. The third door is allocated for receiving cold storage items.

The warehouse will receive various types of boxcars for sundries, and reefers for cold storage items.



A highway overpass helps to hide the access to the fiddle tracks. The road crossing is a feature I wanted to include in the scene. The addition of a road crossing not only serves as a scenic feature, but adds additional operating requirements for the layout as well. Engine crews must flag the street crossing and blow the horn before crossing. A sound-equipped

locomotive fits the bill perfectly!
My Walthers sound-equipped Missouri Pacific GP15-1 locomotive is a model of an actual locomotive that operated on the rail line serving Desloge, Missouri. Although I have not located a photo of the prototype loco shunting cars at the warehouse, I have seen photos of the prototype loco operating on the tracks nearby.



The WFS Micro was designed to be portable. When the layout is not in use, it is stored in a Rubbermaid storage container. The container has built-in wheels which helps when transporting to model railway exhibitions. The layout has its own display benchwork as well. The legs are removable and handles are attached to make transporting it easier. The benchwork is a bit heavy, but it certainly adds flexibility when displaying at exhibitions. I also use the benchwork at home when the layout is not traveling.

You do not need a lot of space to capture the feel of a prototype railway location. A micro layout is an excellent way to model an actual location without the need for a lot of real estate or time. The sky's the limit when it comes to adding additional levels of details too.

The WFS Micro Layout has been displayed at several model railway exhibitions over the last six years. Unfortunately due to COVID-19, the layout has been dormant since 2020. Hopefully the layout will make a return to the exhibition

circuit in the autumn of 2022.

Despite the lack of display opportunities due to COVID, the WFS Micro continues to bring me great satisfaction and joy. There is a great sense of satisfaction completing a layout based on a prototype location. It is also a joy to operate it at home. I look forward to several more years of enjoying this micro layout!



All packed up in a tote. An advantage of micro layouts



One of Tom's prototype research photographs used in the construction of the layout. Some interesting details to note. Like the embankment in front of the overgrown siding



Tom Conboy

Tom's introduction to the hobby was at age seven with an H0 train set under the Christmas tree. His first serious attempt at building a

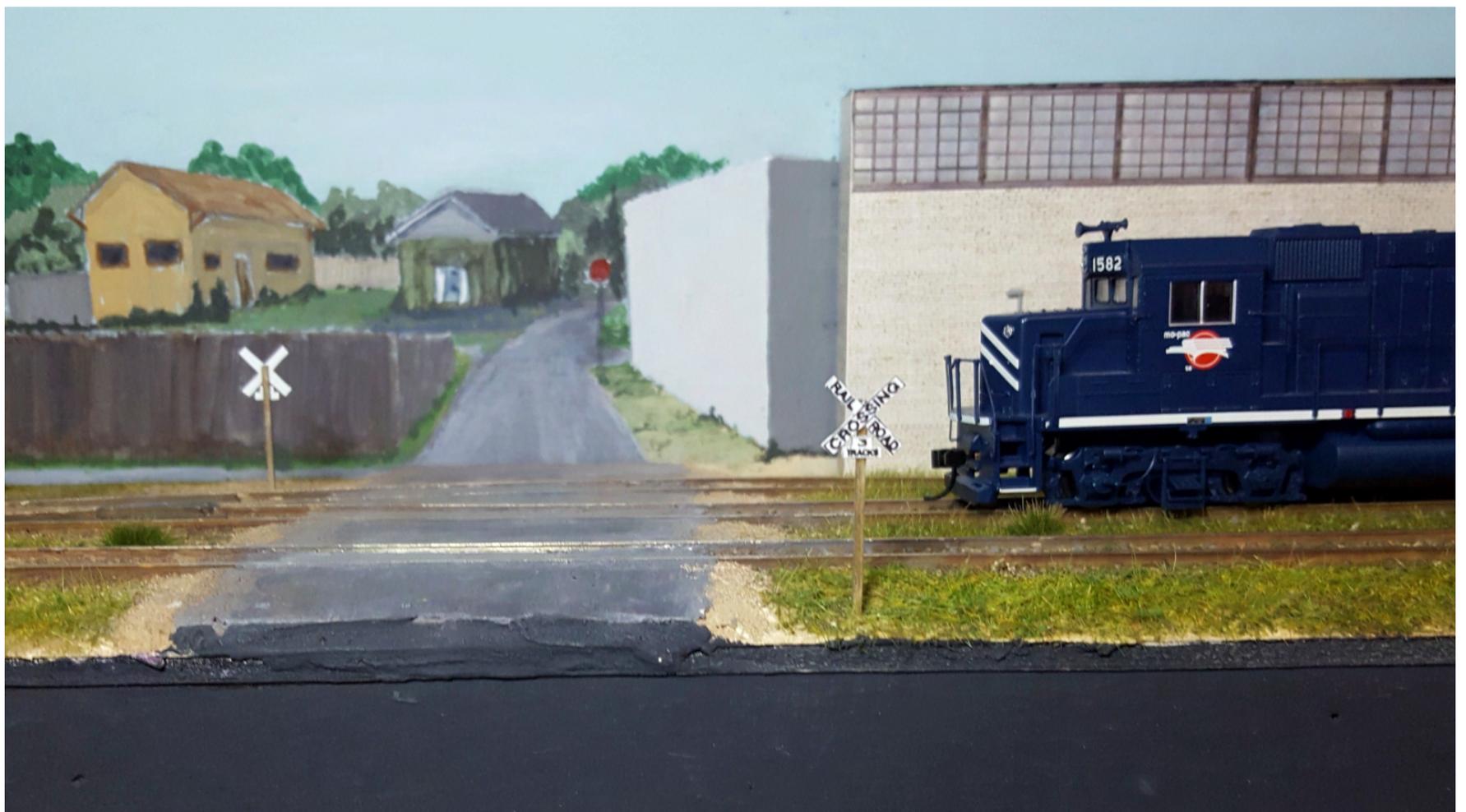
layout didn't occur until fifteen years later with the purchase of a Bachmann N scale set. Over the next thirty-seven years, his interest and participation in the hobby continues to grow. Tom's passion for layout building began to shift in 2016 with the completion of the WFS Micro. His current modeling focus is to build more micro layouts!

Tom is also the host/producer of the Cartel Conversations Podcast along with his co-host, the publisher of the Dispatch, Ian Holmes. He is also an ordained minister, and is currently the pastor of a rural church located in southeast Missouri, USA.



As you may know, Tom is a quite talented artist, and here you can see how he has used one of his research photographs to assist in

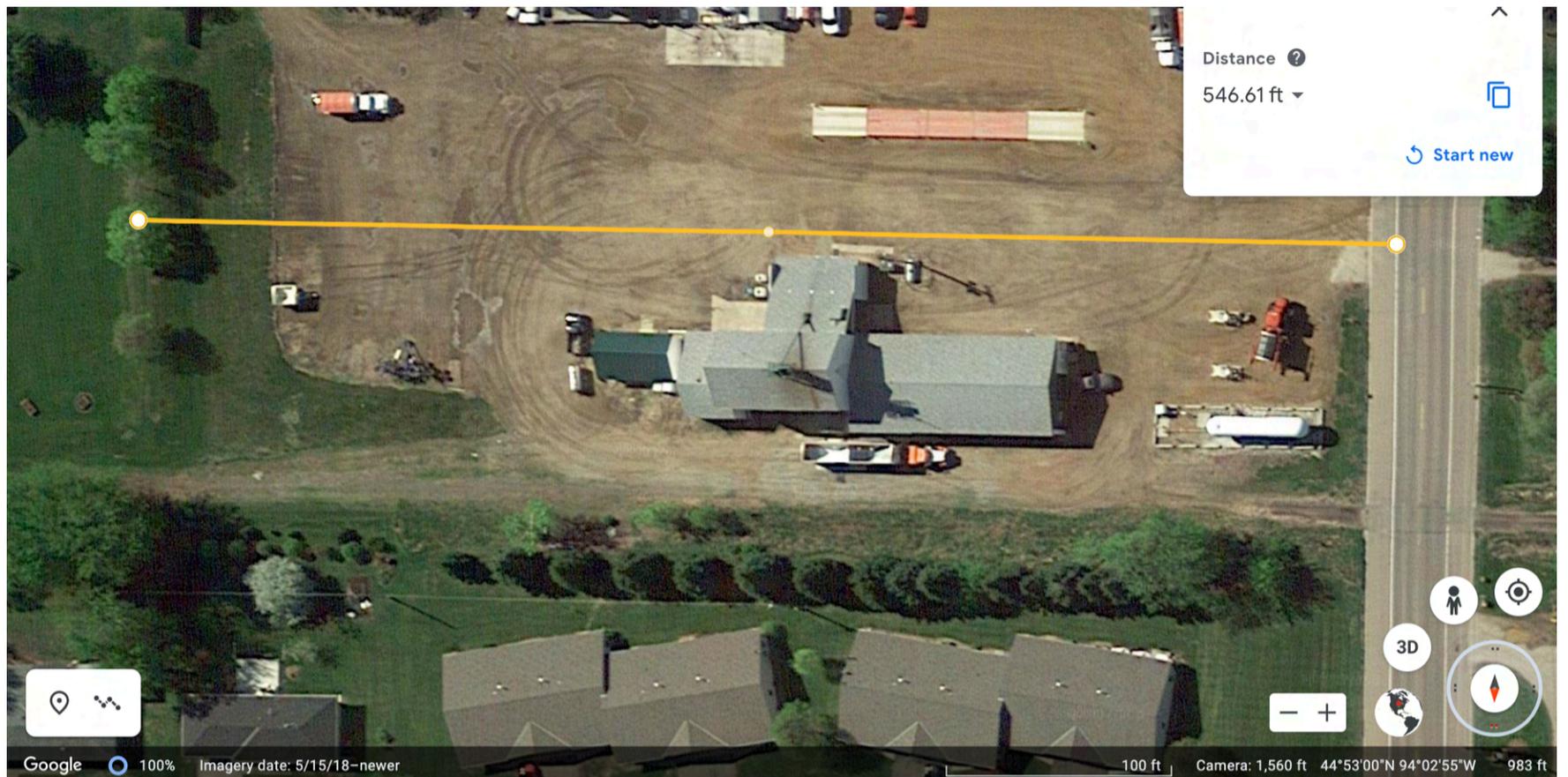
the painting of his backscene. It's personal touches like this that help to lift the Wetterau Food Services layout above the ordinary.



McLeod County Co-op

Ian Holmes

The editor finds a micro layout subject in front of him



The Google Earth view shows the compact nature of the site. The parchmarks clearly show where the siding ran, and where it joined the main line.

Following on from my piece in the preview issue about a small industry suitable for a micro layout, Duluth Steel. I searched and searched for something else that could be micro layout suitable. Then I realised it was right in front of me.

The small village of Lester Prairie was founded in 1886 with the arrival of the Great Northern Railroad. As with many a small settlements on the prairie, the railroad was the lifeline. It brought in supplies and took out products like grain and lumber. The town had several grain elevators, as well as a lumber yard that operated for the best part of 100 years.

The line through Lester, (as we locals call it), was known as the "Hutch Spur". It ran from Lyndale Junction yard in the west of Minneapolis to Hutchinson, across 40 miles of Minnesota farmland. Built by the Great Northern Railroad, over the years The Great Northern merged with Northern Pacific Railway, which formed Burlington Northern Railroad. The Burlington Northern sold the line

to Dakota Rail in 1985, and in 1995, RailAmerica purchased the Dakota Rail, after it went bankrupt.

The line was finally closed in 2001, and after abandonment, the track bed was bought by local authorities and converted into a recreational trail.

Despite it being almost a quarter of a century since the rail line was officially abandoned, there are still remnants of its past use out there, and it is one of these old facilities that I'd like to present for your consideration.

Many settlements on the prairies have an agricultural co-op. Where all the farmers in an area pool their resources in order to purchase things, and in some cases sell produce, in order to operate more efficiently. They could bring in fertilisers, seeds and suchlike and sell grain for example.

Lester Prairie has one such co-operative. The Hutchinson Co-op that serves much of McLeod county. Though the railroad has long since gone from the village. The Co-op is still a busy place.

It is a compact site with the potential for a lot of operation, and as such could be the basis of a micro layout or a destination on a larger basement empire.

The plant opened in the 1960's as Cominco American and has changed hands and names several times over the years. The principal traffic was granulated fertiliser that was delivered in hopper cars and Anhydrous Ammonia in tanks. Other materials could be delivered in box cars, and it's not inconceivable that agricultural equipment may have been delivered on flat cars.

As you can see from the photographs, the rails are still there even though the line was abandoned in 2001.

The structure is very typical for a rural co-op. The loading point for the pelleted fertiliser is still there. The presence of a lorry in that location on the Google Earth photo would indicate that it is still in use. Further along, there's a large door in the wall, I expect boxcars may have been unloaded at this spot in the past.

At the end of the siding distant from everything else, is the ammonia tank. Even though it is a compact site, there is still plenty of room for a team track spot, for any other materials that may need to be unloaded here.

The motive power that operated the trains on the Hutch Spur were actually quite varied and pictures exist on the McLeod County historical society website of SW1200's, GP9's, and F8's in charge of trains.

Of particular note on the freight trains was the extended cabooses X-100/X-180. A caboose built on a 50' boxcar frame at the Great Northern shops in Waite Park, MN. Model this and run it on your layout for extra interest. Who would believe a 50' long caboose was real?

Another notable working, was the Dinner train. A white linen, fine dining experience, that took passengers from the Twin Cities to Hutchinson and back. Passing a F8 headed luxury dining train through your micro would cause some raised eyebrows!



Varied rooflines and the loading ductwork makes for an interesting structure



The structure seen from the western end. Some pipework and the vapor bleed off tank for the Ammonia tank can be clearly seen.



The Ammonia storage tank. You can sometimes detect the faint smell of Ammonia as you pass by it.



The railroad has been closed since 2001, but the rails are still there

The track plan here is nothing more than a tuning fork as you can clearly make out in the Google Earth photo at the start of the article. But it's quite clear that the potential is far greater than the simple siding would suggest. There are, at a minimum, three clear spots for cars. The hopper loading and unloading point, the door in the storage building wall, and the ammonia tank. Three clear spots for three different styles of freight car: Hopper, Box car, and Tank car respectively. An additional team track spot for anything different like a flat car loaded with some agricultural equipment would not be out of place.

An operating session involving switching one car

out of one spot, whilst spotting another somewhere else would make for some thought provoking movements.

With such a small simple layout, don't think of an operating session as one day. A session could equal *one week* on the prototype. With one movement representing one day, there would be a day when a train passes through and neither picks up or drops off a car. Perceptive viewers at a train show will know what's going on. Also don't forget you have that fine dining experience train to come through to really change things up.

All in all, a small location with a lot of potential.

Editor says: The help of local residents was invaluable in the preparation of this article. It was quite amazing the amount of information that was out there about this small town feature. Far more than I need to feature in this article.

Perhaps you live in a small town with a similar industry to model, that locals could supply you with research material. The line also featured in the Winter 1975 issue of Railfan magazine. The article includes pictures of the remarkable X-100 later renumbered X-181 extended cabooses.



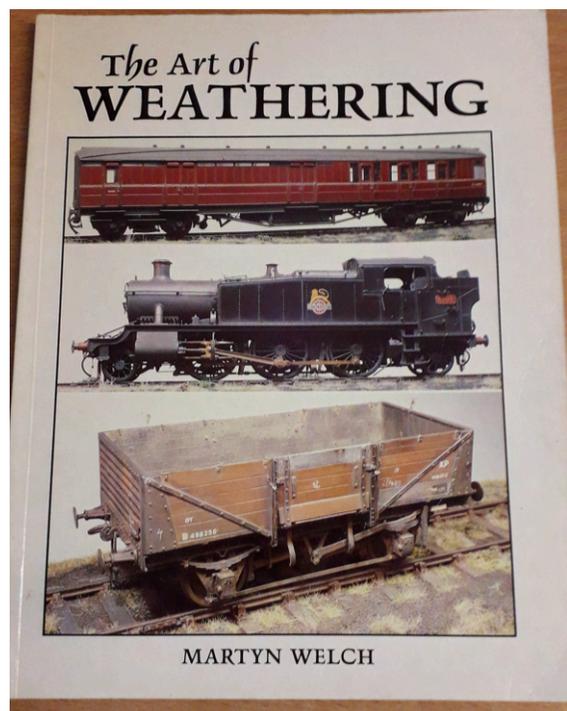
The rails of the long out of use siding can be seen glinting in the early morning sun



The hopper loading/unloading point



This section of the facility is rather lengthy and could easily be shortened to fit the confines of a micro layout without losing any effect. The location of the door could be shifted a little as well, and still be a believable structure.



The Art Of Weathering. Martyn Welch

A weathering bible for anyone wanting to make their models look that bit more realistic.

Published by Wild Swan, it covers locomotives, rolling stock and other details with a description of methods and materials essential if you want to dip your toes in the murky waters of weathering.

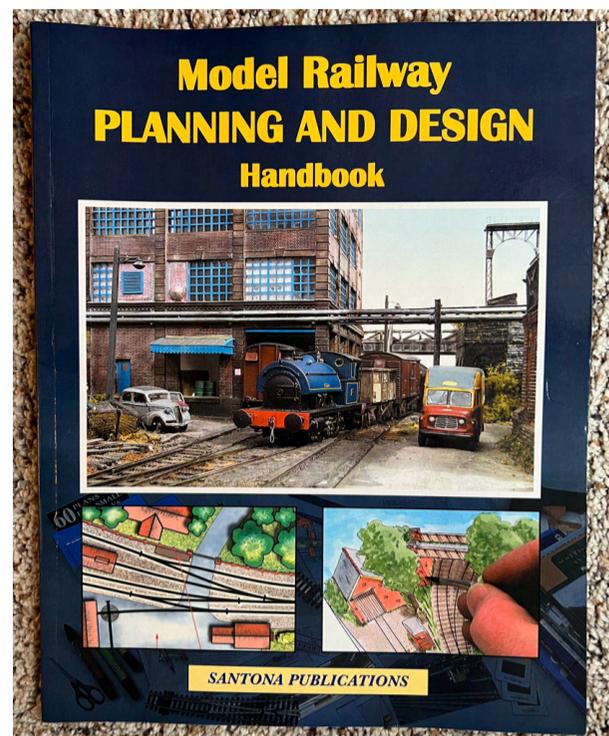
Martyn gives a brief introduction and description of materials and then starts by describing the process in detail he uses for weathering a steam locomotive, then Diesels, rolling stock and finally buildings, with an emphasis on mixing and blending a palette of colours together instead of one weathering shade.

It's initially aimed at 7mm scale modelling but has a lot of reference and photos for 4mm scale. I've learnt a lot from this book and it's a very interesting read. Although first published in 1993 and products and methods have moved on a lot, it's still a 'go to' book whenever I need to find some inspiration, and the method of rusting a 16 ton mineral wagon is one of the best I've yet to see.

There's plenty of photos although sadly too few in colour, if anything that's the only thing that lets it down.

All in all I'm sure it's on many a modeller's shelf and thoroughly deserving of that place.

Steve B.



Model Railway Planning and Design Handbook. Steve Flint, Paul Lunn, Neil Ripley, Ken Gibbons, and Jack Burnard.

This is a book I look at quite often when I get something of a "planner's block".

The five authors all take on a particular aspect of layout design or style of layout that they have experience with.

There is a lot of sound advice on designing layouts and some inspirational layouts are featured.

I myself am a sucker for the layout visualisations of Paul Lunn, and all the layout plans are illustrated in his inimitable style. I will admit that his images of the British Oak Coal depot layout, spurred me on to create my version in my APA box, and there are a few other of his sketches that might influence me more yet.

Santona publications have several model railway books available, all worth your attention.

Ian H.



Landscape Creation Masakatsu Jindoh

So why buy a copy of *Landscape Creation*? Let's be frank, you are not going to find this book at your local library or hobby shop, so it will take a bit effort to get it (but Amazon will surely come to the rescue). For one, inspiration; its color photographs are superb. Two, you can learn about weathering techniques within these 64 pages. Three, *Landscape Creation* is a diorama book that avoids military subjects - as a model railroader, military scenes are probably a bit esoteric for you.

Four, if you are a large-scale modeler, this softcover book will introduce you (pages 39 - 41) to the step-by-step assembly, painting, and weathering of the 1/24 scale DoozyModelworks line of accessories - sold by AK Interactive and available from many online retailers. Finally, if you are into super-detailing a scene, you will learn much from Jindoh's wonderfully detailed examples. Be forewarned, this book is written mostly in Japanese. The editor makes a valiant attempt at bilingualism but largely fails.

I found my copy on Amazon. I would encourage anyone interested in upping their game in terms of scenery to buy this book. I also hope this review encourages others to pick up other foreign language diorama books - there is much to learn.

Diorama books are not just for diorama builders in many respects, a well designed model railroad can be thought of as a string of dioramas through which trains travel.

Nick K.

Carl Arendt's Small Layout Scrapbook

Model Railroading in Very Small Spaces



Ideas, modeling tips and 100 layouts from the award-winning website "Micro Layouts for Model Railroads" at www.carendt.us

Small Layout Scrapbook Carl Arendt

After years of browsing Carl Arendt's web site, I was recently given a copy of his "Small Layout Scrapbook" (self-published in 2006). He defines "small layout" as a "tiny space (under 4x6 feet or 120x180 cm)". After 125 entries in his online Scrapbook site at carendt.com, Carl picked what he considered the best material from the first three years for this book.

I like the book because it's curated by the Old Master, and because it's easier to locate things in it than on the web site. Plus, I spend a lot of time looking at web pages, but still prefer being able to sit on the patio and leaf through a physical copy. Carl's choices are all inspirational and informative. Perhaps most important for me, as a relative newcomer to the micro-layout, was a collection of the most imitated "Classic Small Layouts". These are time-tested designs that we should all be familiar with. The layouts shown were decided by a poll of the online discussion group. These designs give a wonderful basis for choosing or designing a small or micro layout, from very simple (A.R. Walkley's Inglenook Sidings, 1925) to much more intricate (Bernard Junk's Quarry Layout, 1991), and from very small (Arendt's Clay Works, 1x1 foot) to a 1x6 foot switching puzzle (Gum Stump & Showshoe RR). In 64 pages, Arendt covers a lot of layout ideas, and I found them all inspirational. Although it is out of print, electronic copies are available at Carl's web site www.carendt.com

Vance B.

Salinas de Berth

Berth Svensson

9mm gauge 3/16"ft scale (S-9) 12" Pizza layout



Berth's layout fits in a Pizza Box. Yum!

I am an industrial railway nerd, and am active in 1/1 scale a train driver and guide at a local peat factory museum at Rytarren in Sweden, where we have 8 locomotives including the famous Hartelius petrol electric locomotive. To me, model railways are micro layouts, and I have built some in different scales over the years.

Midway between 00/H0 and O scale, S scale, is the perfect scale for me.

This 12" x 12" S-9 pizza layout is inspired by the saltworks in the Mediterranean (*of which there are many -Ed*). Solana Ston in Croatia is a well known example among modellers.

Two notable working features of this layout are the curved turntable and the drawbridge over

the tracks into the saltworks.

The track is PECO 009, which is a bit of a cheat but is easy to get hold of.

Due to the tight radius of the curves, staples are used as couplers (*see photograph -ED*). Tweezers are used to couple and uncouple the wagons. The locomotives and wagons are scratch built and there is also a VW bus motorised with a KATO drivetrain. 1/64 is a popular scale for auto modellers and diorama builders so parts and figures are easy to find.



The loco pulls a wagon across the drawbridge from the saltworks



Here you can see the staple coupler system adopted by Berth

Editor says: If your layout has sharp curves and your stock derails, you may find it worthwhile to try using staples like this as couplers. Prototype lines use rods or bars like this too. It does work. I used it myself

on my Purespring Watercress layout (like the prototype used rods and bars) with great success.



A train running over the curved turntable



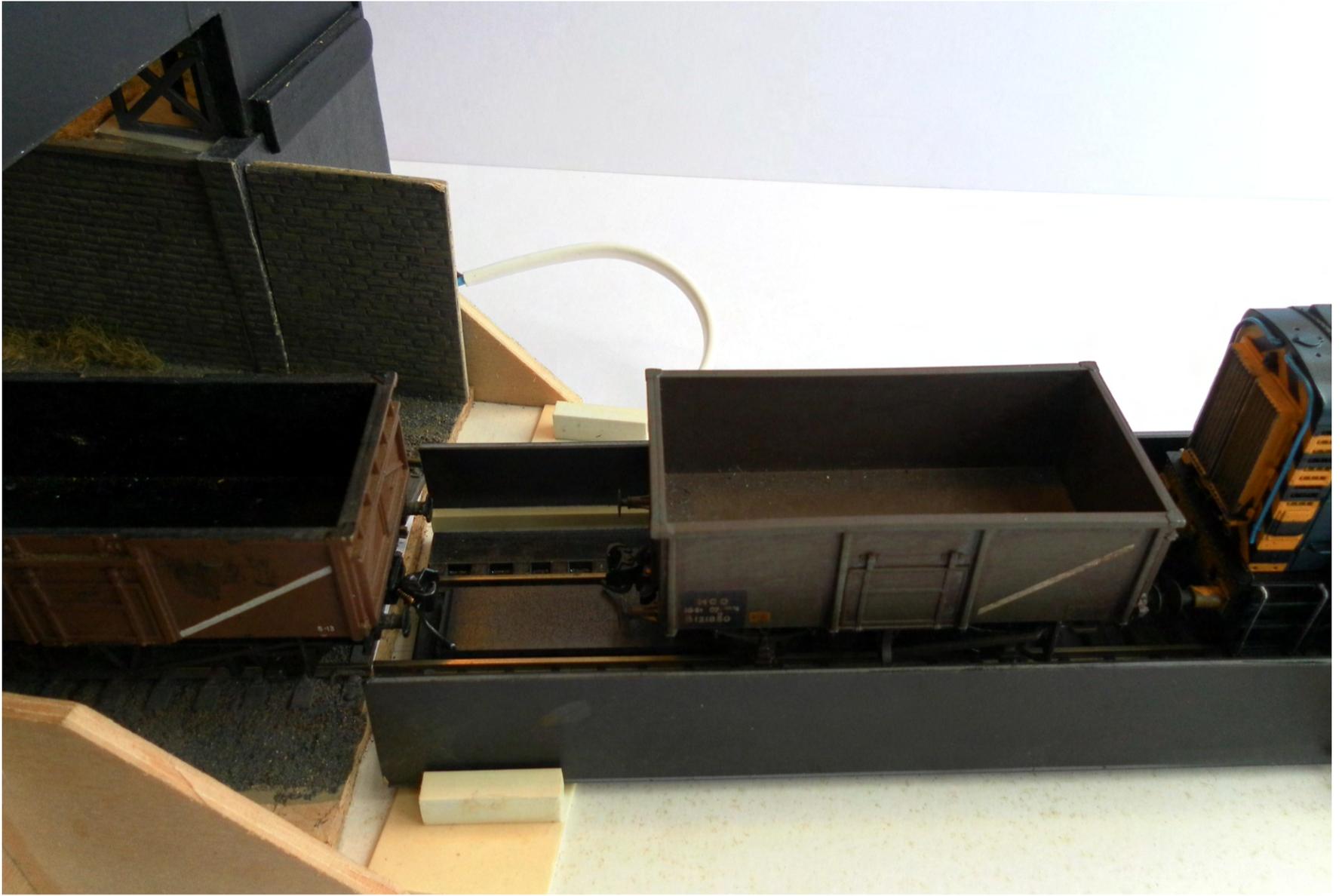
The converted VW van waits its turn to enter onto the layout

Box Metals (revisited)

Paul Corkrum.

The pioneering boxfile layout reappears





A short while ago, I received an email from Paul Corkrum, telling me that following a passing of a family member, he had come into possession of Colin Peake's classic Box file layout, Box Metals, or if it wasn't the original Box Metals, it was something very like it. I knew that Colin had sold the layout on, and the he had lost track of it. Paul asked if I'd like to see pictures. Silly question! I was curious to see if it was what it was and how it had fared over the years. There's been a little patching up here and there, and as you can see from one of the

photographs of the sector plate Kadee couplers are used. But it's still unmistakably Box Metals. It just goes to show that Micro Layouts, and Box file layouts in particular can last quite some time when looked after properly. I contacted Colin and told him of the re-appearance of his old layout. He replied telling me he had be thinking about it that very day. He had heard that the person he sold it to had passed on and wondered what had happened to it.

Bryncrug Sidings

Andy Biggs

O:16.5 scale 7mm:1ft 48" x 14" 1200mm x 355mm



An overall view of the layout

Bryncrug Sidings is a fictitious branch line of the Talylyn Railway in Mid-Wales. Bryncrug is a small village, 3 miles from Tywyn, which is where the Talylyn railway terminates. The short branch line to Bryncrug could have been built to provide a service to the village community and would have joined the mainline of the railway at Rhydyronen, where there is a station and for more many years, also a siding. The layout is set in the twilight years of the railway during the 1940's, before it became the first preserved heritage railway, to be run by volunteers. It is inspired by childhood holidays in the 1970's, camping at Rhydyronen and using the railway to explore the local countryside. This was at a time before the Nant Gwernol extension was completed. A popular walk for the family was to take the train to Abergynolwyn and then walk up through the Bryn Eglwys quarry, before heading up hill to the summit of Tarrenhendre. From here it was

possible to drop down to Dolgoch station and catch the last train of the day back to Rhydyronen.

The layout was built during the Covid lockdown and the size was partly influenced by the materials that were to hand. However, some components such as the track were obtained via mail order. The aim was to have a small layout that was easy to use at home or to transport to local meetings. The baseboards are made from a selection of MDF and plywood. The track is Peco 0-16.5, with sleepers removed and spread out on the track to make it less uniform.

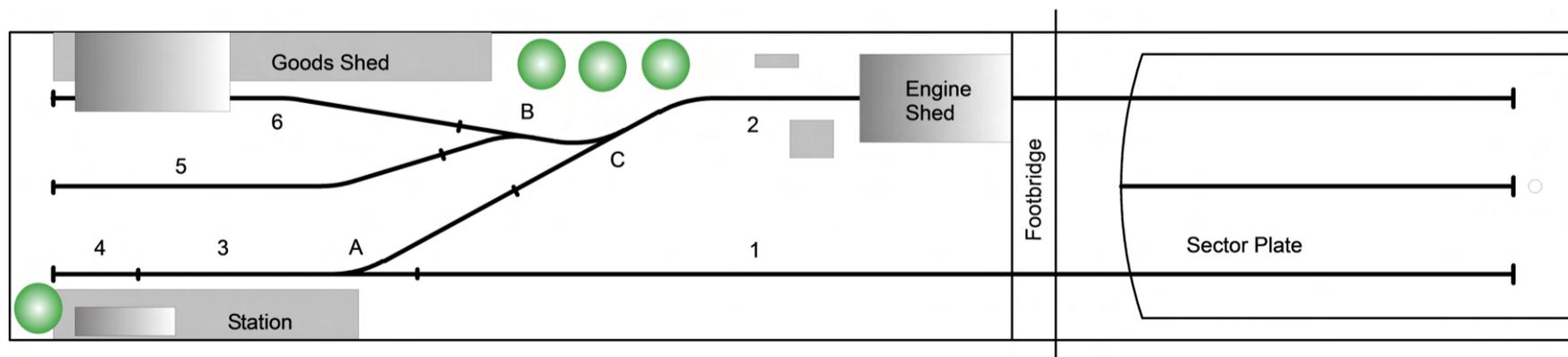


Waiting for the train

It is traditionally controlled via a DC controller with a remote lead, with switched sections and solenoid point motors. The switches can be moved from the front to the rear, so the operating position can be changed.

The rolling stock was from an existing layout and is a mixture of kit and scratch built. The buildings are made from either polystyrene sheet or foam board and then covered with embossed plastic sheet, before painting and detailing. I have found that using soft coloured

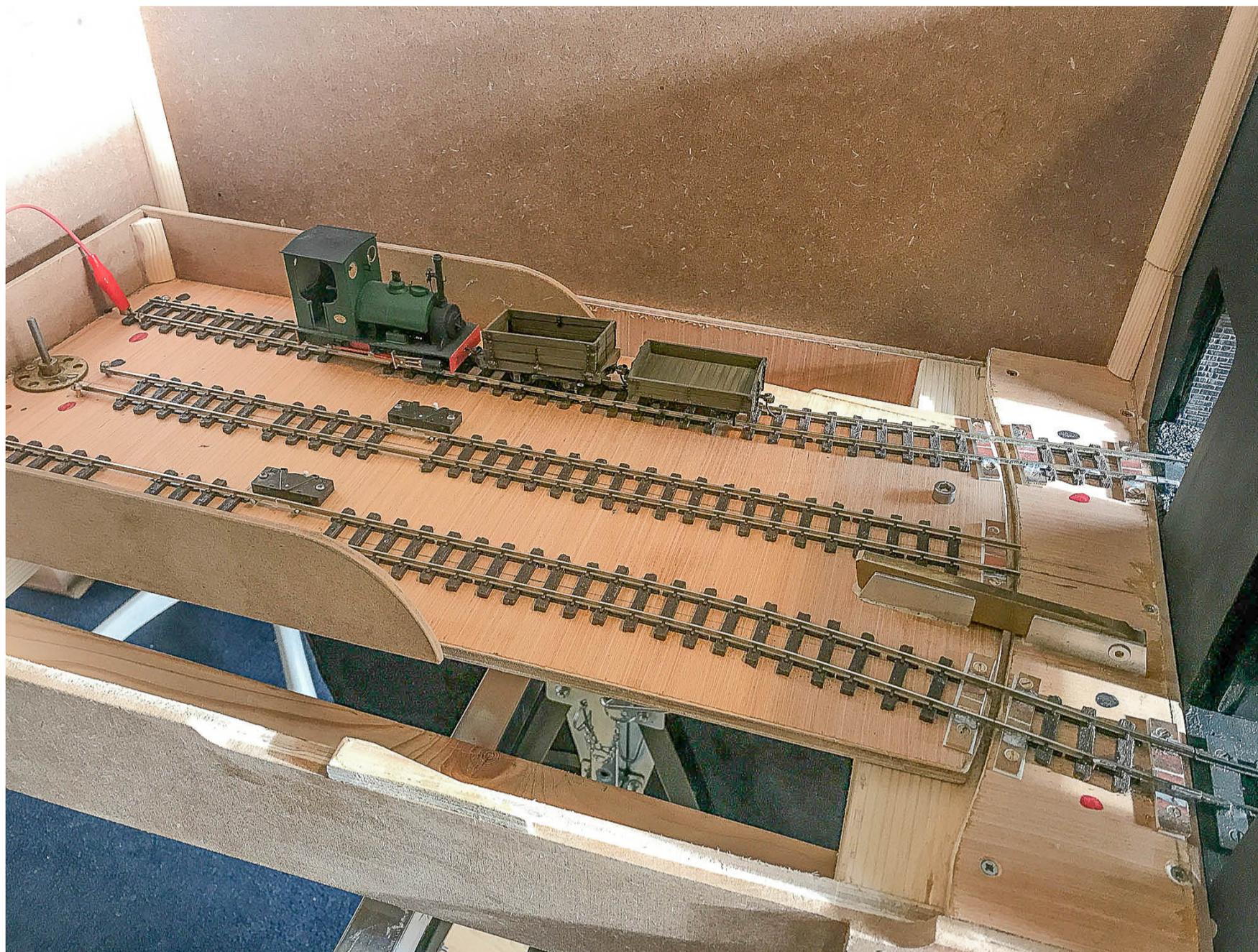
pencils is a quick and easy way to add local tones, it is easy to remove if you make a mistake. It is finally fixed with a light spray of matt varnish. Two lights have now been fitted which help evenly illuminate the layout. The ease to transport and ability to quickly set up as a free standing layout make it an enjoyable experience to share with fellow modellers



A trackplan with a lot of potential







A good view of the sector plate on Brycrug Sidings. You can see the red crocodile clip for powering the track, and a threaded bolt for the pivot point. The black boxes alongside the rails are simple on/off switches to isolate the locomotives. The gapped copper clad pcb (printed circuit board) sleepers hold the rails in gauge at the edge of the baseboards and sector plate. It is more hard wearing than the plastic sleepers on the track, and less likely to get damaged if it catches on something.

You can also see what looks like a lever there, this is for locating the track with the exit roads. As the sector plate is rotated, the lever locates over the pin and holds the tracks in alignment. Due to the narrow width of the layout, the sector plate is limited in its movement. The centre track will reach either of the lines on the actual layout.

Andy Biggs

Became interested in narrow gauge railways through family holidays to north wales in the 1970's. My father was a model engineer and made 5inch gauge working steam engines

from drawings and photos he made on these trips. Early retirement gave the opportunity to rediscover some these memories through return visits and some modelling.

Nowhere Road Halt

Ian Holmes

4mm/00 scale. Size: 26" x 7' 660mm x 125mm



Nowhere Road Halt was my entry in the Micro Model Railroad Cartel Christmas competition. Much to my embarrassment, it finished second in the voting. So I thought I'd share some extra thoughts about the layout in these pages. The initial inspiration for the layout came from a photo on the Disused Railway stations website. The location of the station is not important. I can't even remember the name right now so I can't find it on the disused-stations.org.uk website So you'll just have to take my word for it.

That's often the way I work when designing micro layouts. The exact details are not important, it's the overall image that matters. Here was a small station with a short platform and a ridiculously short siding, that seemed to want to head into a field before stopping and not actually going anywhere at all. I had nearly all the bits and pieces to hand to build this. Track, structures, trees etc; it was just a case of putting everything together in a coherent whole that I had established from the

image on the website.

Working from memory of a photograph allows you to pick and choose how you interpret things. Creating an atmospheric feel rather than a slavish copy.

Some aspects of the image you'll remember. Others you won't. You might draw on another image in your memory and incorporate it in there. The wagon body used as a goods shed was not in the original picture, but another one I had filed in my brain. It just seemed to fit in there.

Obscuring the exits offstage is always of primary importance to me on a micro layout. The grounded goods van on a loading dock works well in this regard and with the edge off the hole in the back scene obstructed by trees this has worked out really well. The addition of the vignette of the two gentlemen talking on the platform has added a lazy relaxed atmosphere of another time to the model.

The other side where the exit is obstructed by the platform and trees, makes for quite a natural scene that I think works well.



The left hand exit is virtually invisible obstructed by trees and platform shelter



Denser trees obscure the exit to the fiddle yard at the right side

The layout itself was built from expanded polystyrene and foamcore board. The track was laid on 1/4" cork cut from tiles. The foamcore board was an experiment in using non-traditional materials for baseboards for those who can't work with wood. To that end, I think this was a success. Though I wouldn't recommend it as a construction method if you were taking the layout to train shows every week. But for something to pull out for a relaxing shunting session on the kitchen table at home, it's perfect.

The simple "tuning fork" track plan is relaxing and quite cathartic to operate. The simple to and fro motion as the locomotive switches a wagon (for there is no room for more than one)

in and out of the siding, becomes almost hypnotic and quite the stress buster.

Having taken the layout to two shows now, I can confirm that even the simplest layouts, when well finished and presented can interest viewers.

The presentation always elicits comments. One father perceptively told his young child. "Look, this is like a picture".

That's about as good a comment as I've had on this little layout.



This view down the layout shows how narrow the baseboard was to fit into the Cartel competition rules, and how tight the clearances are.



My wife, Lorrie, is always a keen assistant in the run up to a show and has a sharp eye for things that I've missed or forgotten about. The small size of the layout makes working on the kitchen table easy.



Ian Holmes

Born in England, I came to the US in 1998 to get married, and became a Citizen in 2010. Model Railway wise, I can't remember a time in my life when model trains weren't around in some capacity. I build in any scale that takes my

fancy. That's why I build micro layouts. I don't have room for a slew of layouts of any decent size. Luckily I have an understanding wife. I've had layouts featured in Model Railroad Planning, Model Trains International and Narrow Gauge and Industrial Railway Modelling Review. I mostly exhibit layouts at shows in the Midwest, having attended The Worlds Greatest Hobby Show and the National Narrow Gauge Convention in Minneapolis. When not building layouts or editing THE DISPATCH, I run marathons, play the banjo and co-drive a rally car. But my other big passion is historic Motor Racing, and I am a member of the Goodwood Road Racing Club. You can find me at The Goodwood Revival as often as I can get away with.

The four square foot “rule”

Ian Holmes

Some discussion about the interpretation of the size guideline

Did you notice? Over this and the previous issue I’ve snuck in a few layouts over four square feet in area. No-body complained. Perhaps no-one noticed.

I thought it might be worth sharing some thoughts on the matter and why you will see layouts larger than four square feet in **THE DISPATCH**.

I will freely admit that in the past I have been quite blinkered on the subject of the layout size. Four square feet and no more. Then I discovered the larger scales 16mm and 7/8ths of an inch to the foot. We even featured their competition in issue 1 of **THE DISPATCH**.

I was then schooled on RMWeb that Carl’s original definition included the word “usually”. This is pretty important. A micro doesn’t always have to be four square feet. In scales like 16mm or 7/8th’s inch to the foot, the sheer area taken up by the track alone can preclude even the simplest micro layout ideas translating under the 4 square feet limit.

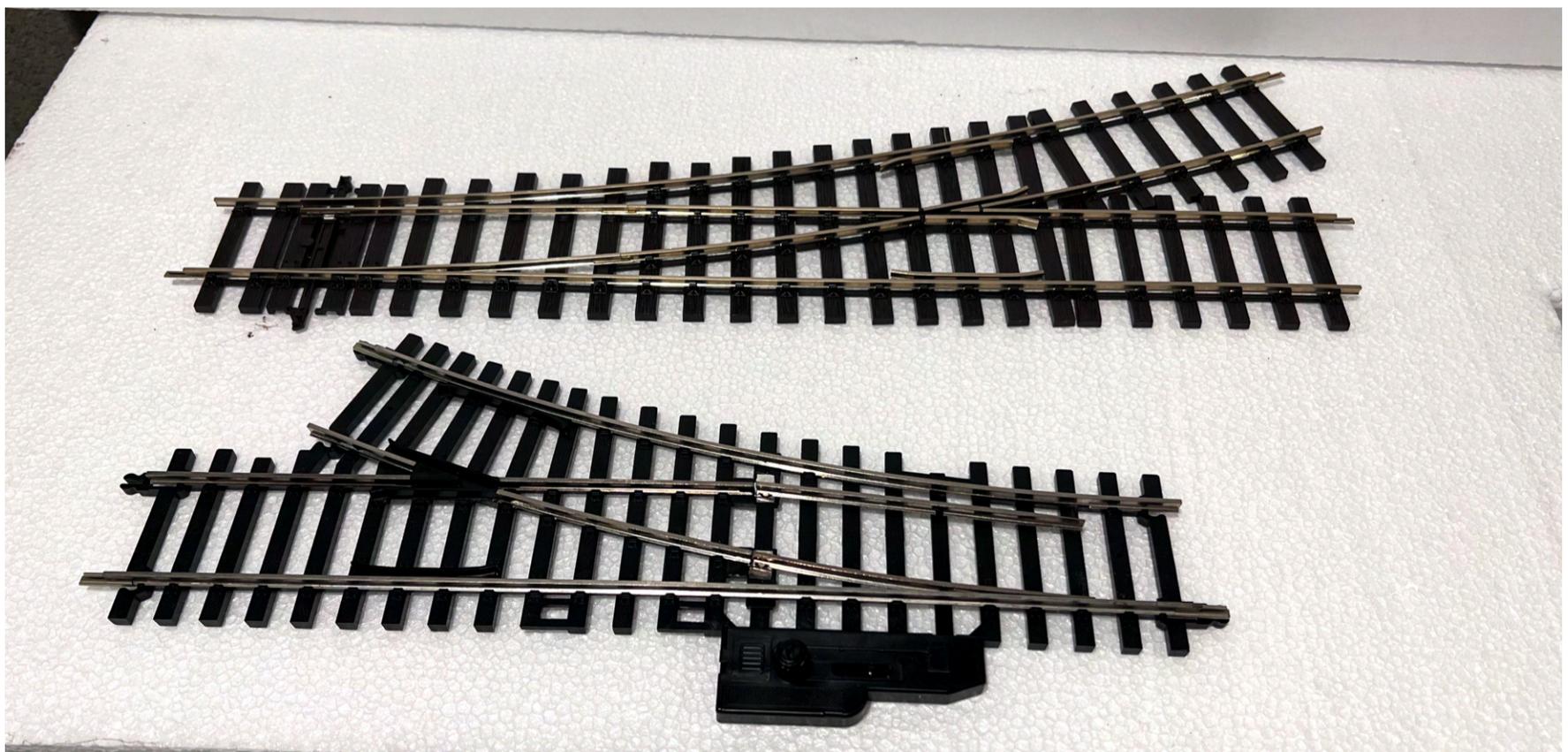
What about finescale modelling like P4, EM and

ScaleSeven in the UK, and P:87 and P:48 in the US? These scales need larger radius points than their coarser scale brothers to work efficiently. A PECO OO/H0 scale set track turnout is 6 3/4” long, the smallest EM gauge point, a B5 I believe, is 8 1/2” in length. In O scale, a small Atlas point is 12” long, the shortest PECO point 15 1/2”. P:48 pointwork starts at about 18” in length. So, a plan that may fit into four square feet in O scale might not in ScaleSeven or P:48. Is it right to ignore that layout just because the builder used a different set of track standards?

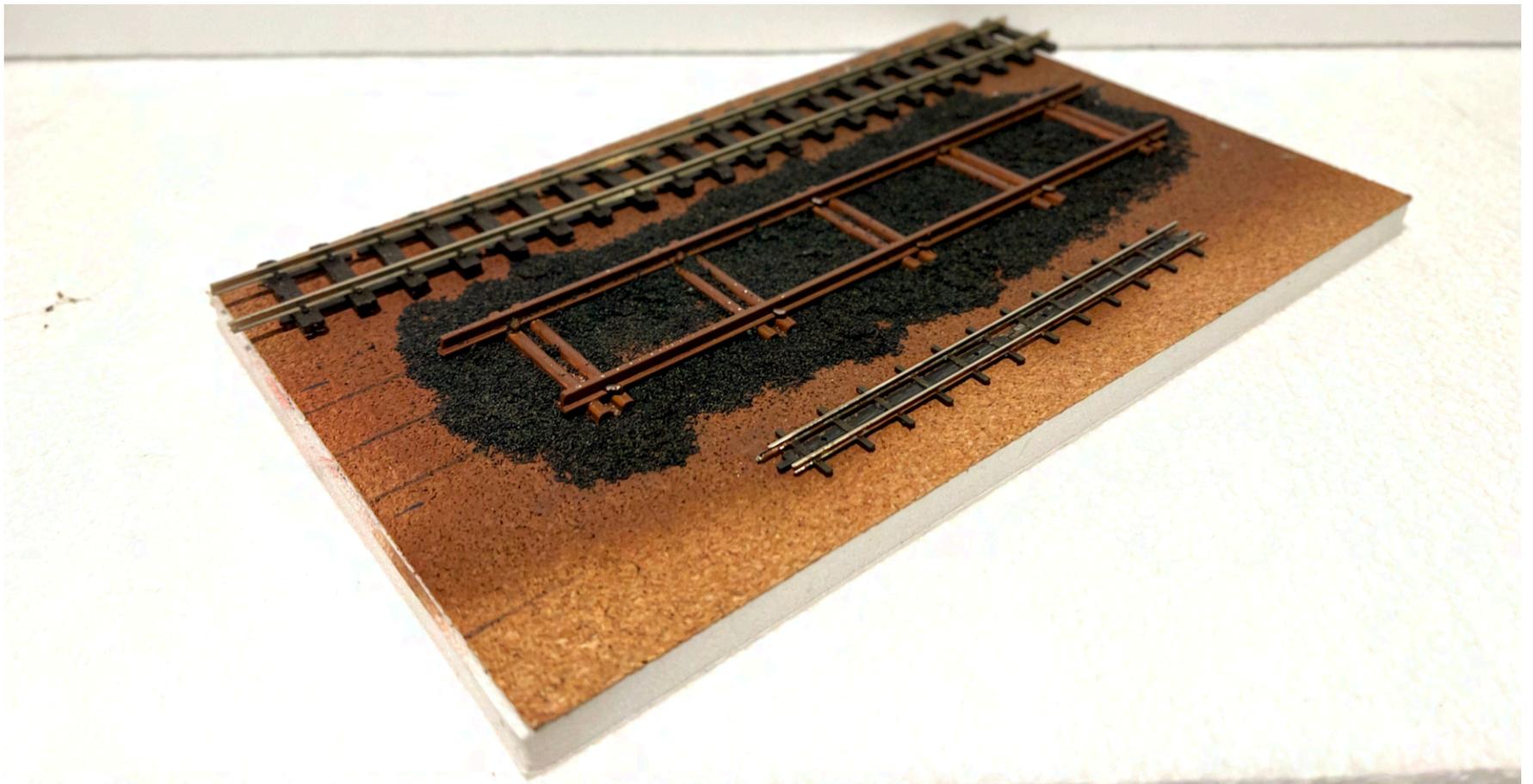
Of course not.

This is just one of the things that I ruminate on when I can’t sleep.

Carl had a phrase that he used for layouts in larger scales that exceeded the four square feet limit. They were “in the spirit of a micro” and this still applies today.



Points. These are both O scale points. Top is the PECO Set track point. Underneath Atlas. Unfortunately, I don’t have a Proto:48 point to put alongside them. It would be longer still.



Three different narrow gauge tracks. All represent the 15-18" gauge range in different scales: PECO Crazy track used for Gn15, Scratch built 18" gauge in 7/8ths scale and Busch H0f for OO 6.5 minimum gauge.

These photographs indicate the problems with the larger scales. You could certainly fit a simple tuning fork plan in H0f or OO 6.5 minimum gauge inside the area of a length of 16mm or 7/8ths inch:1ft length of track. We don't want to end up with the situation where one track plan fits the micro layout "rule" while exactly the same plan in a larger scale doesn't. That's one of the inequalities of the guideline.

One way that I look at it when measuring the 4' limit in the larger scales is to consider the railway loading gauge, and work around that that.

Let's say that in your chosen large scale the width of the loading gauge is two inches. In that instance a 12" length of track would take up an area of 24 square inches. Which would equate to 24 feet of plain track. That might be a lot of track. I'm not sure.

The idea isn't perfect. I'm just trying to create an all inclusive concept for the larger scales. I realise that it's a contentious matter among the old school purists. But there are large scale modellers who want to be included.

I have had a few emails where my correspondent has said that they enjoy the micro layout concept. But because they model in "X" large scale they won't be able to contribute to **THE DISPATCH**. I promptly tell them that's a load of nonsense.

Some will say we don't need that level of measuring. Well, some people like to have hard and fast rules to go by. Some don't.

Times have come on since Carl passed and I'm sure that if I could tell him that there are modellers building micro layouts in scales as large as 7/8ths inch to the foot he would be very excited, and would be featuring them on his website, that's for sure!

I know he suggested one idea in 7/8ths himself in the early days of his website.

So, in short, the vast majority of content will still be under four square feet. But larger scales get a little wriggle room. How much the room wiggles depends on me.

But basically it all boils down to this. You'll know a layout is a micro layout when you see it, and I don't think anyone can argue with that.



The Ruston 48DS peers out of the run down loco shed

ScrapNook was thought up after losing interest in my 8x2 layout after a bout of covid. During my recovery I was reading an issue of the Micro Model Railway Dispatch, and I found a layout that really spoke to me and what I like to see in a layout, especially a micro.

I knew I had the baseboard from a previous scrapped layout in the shed, so once I felt up to it I got myself into cutting it up and making it into a new layout.

I was aiming to keep the scenic side to the maximum dimensions of an A4 box file here in the UK, but I opted to imagine that the front of

the box file had been folded down and used that for the road at the front.

The track plan is simple and just a single short Y point and a longer siding without any points. I followed the track plan I saw in the Dispatch and made the scenery how I wanted it, to change how it looked from what I had seen in the Dispatch.

I used peco Code 75 track as that is what I had in stock, got a cheap 2nd hand Y point online and modified it for DCC running, which I always do even on micro layouts.



The weathering of the road is a nice detail here

The layout was built specifically for the Hornby 48DS Ruston to be used as it is absolutely dinky and will fit into any space this small. Last year I built another micro layout and got the Ruston for it, worried about slow speed running over point frogs, even live ones that I use, I modified it and installed a stay alive capacitor into the cab, so this little thing will run over any track. I wanted to have a small shelter or shed on the layout and I opted to have a scratch built lean-to type shed, mainly because nothing off the shelf

would have fit the space or been how I wanted it in the space available.

I remembered I had bought some scale steel sheet a few years ago, dug it out of my spares box and set to cutting it down into scale corrugated sheet sizes, and using the scratch builders staple of coffee stirrers I put together the shed.

Using a 3V power supply from battery operated LED Christmas lights from a pound shop I have installed a micro LED into the shed so the little people can work away at night too.



The presentation of the layout is totally in keeping with its ethos

The name for the layout came from it being mostly remade from scrap or spares and it being a micro inglenook, so instead of it being a 3-3-5 setup it's 2-2-3, not as much operational potential in it as a normal inglenook but it works. I have 6 wagons, all 2nd hand and weathered, and I took the match truck from the Ruston and put a coupling in the end not supplied with one, so now it can be used as a flat bed wagon too.

As this is set in no particular area or era I have also acquired a Hornby W4 Peckett and this will also work really well in the confined space of the layout too.

The layout has an integral fiddle yard, so it needed a way to move stock between the point and the siding. I used 5mm foamboard as a base for the layout on top of the baseboard, its easier to install scenic items, and I built the cassette out of a piece of this with balsa sheet cut down to allow for handling.

To apply power to the cassette I used copper tape, 2 bits on the cassette and 2 for each entry point to the layout, all wired into the DCC bus wires.

I have never intended on exhibiting it, but it could actually be really fun to do so and would allow for a good bit of conversation when operating it.





The way that the dirt has been carried from the yard and onto the road is a lovely detail



Alex Hill

I have had a love of railways and trains for as long as I can remember. I had the usual Hornby train set as a child. As many do, I lost interest in my teenage years . Flash forward to

2018 and I rediscovered my love for the hobby finding an old train set during a house move. After re-starting in OO scale, I tried N scale for a while due to lack of space, but went back to OO in 2019 and haven't looked back since. I discovered micro layouts and that lead me to discover THE DISPATCH. I mostly model the late sectorisation era of British Rail I. also like the more modern DRS era as I have a fondness for prototype workings that can be achieved with a simple flask train. Class 31 and class 20 locomotives are my favourites as I live close to their haunts in Wales. I am a keen photographer and love to get out and about with my dog. The perfect day would be combining all my hobbies in taking my dog for a walk while photographing trains.

The Garden Railway

Rob Jackson

Scale: 009 4mm:ft narrow gauge Size 16" x 6" 406mm x 152mm

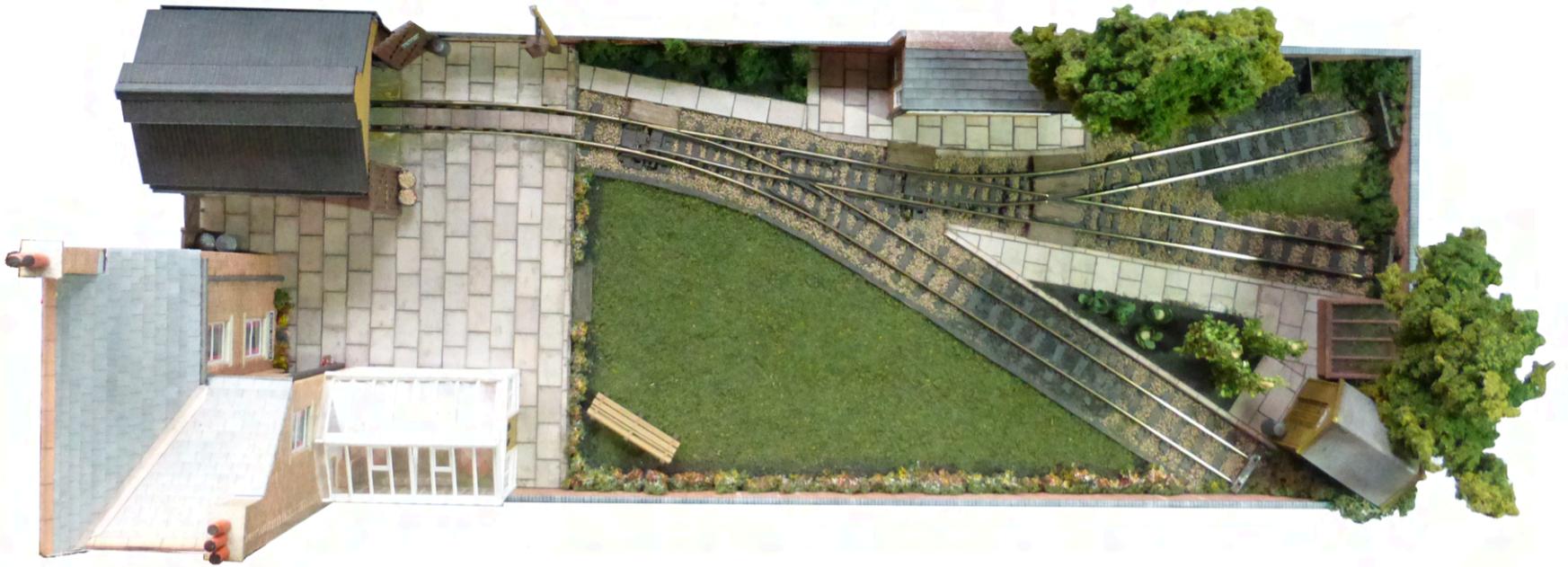


Who wouldn't want to see this in their garden?

The Garden Railway has its beginnings in the uncertainty of 2020. Unfortunately for me though, by the time my work had closed for the duration and I'd decided I should have a try at building a micro, almost all the model railway shops in the UK were either closed or out of stock! Any layout that did materialise would have to be built solely from items I had stashed away.

Inspiration came from Adrian Full of the Micro Layouts Facebook group. Adrian had read a BBC news article about a homeowner in Eastbourne, UK, who'd built a short 30ft section of standard gauge track in their garden, complete with a Workman's Trolley that ran up and down, and in turn he'd created a OO scale layout based on this in 6"x16", featuring a house, garden, and a single stretch of track running in and out of a shed, just big enough for a Bachmann Wickham Trolley.

The idea for a full sized railway in a garden isn't a new one, certainly in the UK. Gotherington station (Now part of the Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway - GWSR.com) is a good example, and ripe for micro layout inspiration. The main station building is now a private residence, with the former goods yard now turfed over to become a garden. However, there is a stretch of standard gauge track running along the edge for a Wickham Trolley and pump truck, complete with timber halt, shed, GWR pagoda building, and even a TOAD brake van doubling as a summerhouse/garden shed! A smaller prototype would be the well known Cadeby Light Railway by the late Rev. Teddy Boston. Having acquired a 2ft gauge locomotive, wagons and track, a short line was laid in a 'U' shape around the edge of the vicarage garden. Again, another one just crying out to be recreated in micro form!



A simple Inglenook track plan gives hours of enjoyment

Inspiration having firmly set in, and boosted even more by discovering I had a Wills 'Garden Accessory Set' in the to do pile (Providing a greenhouse, conservatory, shed and cold frames), I set to work. Instead of making a pure copy in OO though, I decided to make it somewhere for my OO9 rolling stock to run. Sketching the same baseboard dimensions out on a piece of paper, I started using a few odd pieces of rolling stock and track to see what could work in the small space. A tuning fork layout was certainly possible, but by using small

Minitrains wagons, with their short wheelbases and couplings, a 5-3-3 Inglenook could be squeezed into the space. Just! The baseboard was assembled from 3mm plywood held together with a hot glue gun. For a larger micro it might not be the best material, but for a tiny one like this it works well, and even better, being gifted a large pile of these sheets from work as rejects, they were free! The track was pinned down soon after, point control being operated through the wire in tube method.



Who wishes their backyard looked like this?



The Locomotive shed is a cleverly converted Wills garage kit

Scenically, the structures on the layout are all kits with ever so slight modifications. The lean-to conservatory became a signal box styled potting shed simply by replacing the glass roof with tiles from Scalescenes, The engine shed was a Wills domestic garage (Just big enough to fit a small tank engine in!) with the roof and gable ends modified to create a long roof vent, raised on a brick base for clearance, and a pair of new taller doors scratch built from corrugated iron pieces from the spares box. The water tower and coal bunker were made from the spare top pieces of a couple of minitrains wagons, whilst the house started out as a half-relief Scalescenes terrace house cut in half (Or should that be quartered?) with one of the downstairs windows blocked off to allow for a conservatory connection. The conservatory itself is the Wills greenhouse, with the door modified and some small pieces of 20thou

plasticard inserted in the panes and along the roof ridges to try and look like ornate ironwork. This look was achieved simply with different sized drill bits in a pin chuck and studying the prototype to try and replicate something not entirely accurate, but in a similar style (I knew that embarrassingly large collection of photographs I've taken of the house conservatory at Alton Towers would come in handy one day!) Even the tiny bench is a Metcalfe kit with the supports repainted brown from bright green. The only exception to the rule is the garden shed, which is a resin building that had been sat in a box for the last 15 years! When it came to painting the structures of the layout I had the nice challenge of only using what colours I had in the paint box. As a result, they ended up being painted in a scheme close to that used by the GWR (No, I've never built a GWR layout, go figure).



If we can't have a railway in our garden, why don't we model what we dream of?

Whilst locomotives and rolling stock were turned out in a livery similar to Sir Arthur Heywood's minimum gauge rolling stock, looking quite at home in their surroundings. Operation is normally in the manner of a traditional 5-3-3 inglenook, though by using slightly larger stock a 4-2-2 also works. The lovers of Welsh narrow gauge will probably laugh though when I reveal the largest item of

goods stock running on the layout so far is a Corris Brake Van!

Despite looking finished, there's still quite a few little jobs that need to be done, such as figures and replacing sections of the walls that have faded. But even so, it's a fun layout to set up on a Sunday afternoon. It certainly brings a new meaning to 'pottering about the garden'!



An example of Nick's work

Having been published several times about the future of model railroading, I realize this topic can bring about many emotions among model railroaders. One opinion I have shared – and has aroused the ire of some – is that somehow the health of Kalmbach's *Model Railroader* is somehow a barometer of the hobby. We have seen its readership and page count suffer tailspin spanning many recent decades. So why do I make the connection? First, MR over the years has been the vehicle by which many have written they were introduced to the hobby of scale modeling; it certainly was for me. Others – and I count some curmudgeons among them – make the argument that with the internet why would one need to layout out monies for a subscription when so much information is on the internet for free. I would counter that reaction by explaining that good modeling and enjoyment is fostered when we look beyond our own modeling niche of scale/era/prototype. I would also respond, why be a cheapskate – there I said it.

Another question I would pose and try to answer is why should we care about the health of MR? Without being repetitive, I would answer – the copy of MR at the bookstore magazine rack or in the doctor's waiting room is

still an important vehicle for bringing in fresh blood into the hobby. We do not want that to disappear. It has been a mainstay of the hobby for approaching a century and has introduced so many great modelers and great hobby ideas to its readership and beyond.

Now here is where I tie together micro layouts, the future of MR, and the hobby overall. As I have written in a *Model Railroad Hobbyist* editorial of June 2019, there is a great thirst for modeling in this nation and presumably throughout the world that plastic modelers such as those in the International Plastic Modelers Society (IPMS) have tapped into and which the model railroading press have overlooked. That thirst can be slaked with micro layouts and even layouts that are a bit too large to quality as such. Years ago, some modelers would bemoan the fact that homes were shrinking so to speak. Instead, the truth was that American homes have been gradually getting bigger over the past few decades.

Problem is the American home, while getting bigger, must serve expanded needs – home offices for both spouses, in-door gyms, craft rooms for a spouse – so the space one can devote to a model railroad may not be increasing. Indeed, another problem is that while homes are getting bigger, leisure time is not, what with longer commutes and longer hours devoted to work for many if not most. Micro layouts are perhaps the single-most effective vehicle by which we can both attract new modelers whose residential situation precludes a basement empire and get armchair modelers out of their armchairs. Can MR rise to the challenge of giving more coverage to smaller layouts? Editors will often excuse themselves with “but we are not getting submissions of x kind”. I always react by posing – is this not a bit of a chicken and the egg problem. Why would anyone submit or even embark of micro layouts if they never see them within your pages? I guess it all boils down to how editors in MR and perhaps the hobby sees itself. Should Kalmbach focus on titillating its readership with basement empires that are largely unattainable to most (for reasons of space, time, skills, and funds)? I would answer no – but then again, I am not their publisher. I would pose a bit of a troubling analogy. Hugh Hefner made it is lifetime career to titillate with fantasy – how did his famous publication – whose title we need not mention – fare? So, I

ask, where does model railroading and *Model Railroader* envision itself in twenty years? Will we be a hobby of declining participation with marked by basement buster layout (what I described as the “dream layout” fueled by what I labelled as the Texas Syndrome) that folks drool about through various publications (print or digital) together with train shows where parents take their children to gawk, but which ends there? Or do we want to see a vibrant hobby tapping into the modeling energies we see on display among folks two generations younger than us at IPMS shows? The choice is up to publishers such as Kalmbach and to us the builders and fans of the smaller layout. One good friend of mine would annually set up large scale trains at Christmas season in a public indoor venue. Grandparents, parents, and children were overjoyed at the show put on. My friend even set out back issues of colorful model railroading magazines for attendees to take. Sadly, in an indication of their lack of interest to pursue this hobby further, no one would take a free issue home so to explore the hobby. The show while entertaining just reinforced the idea that this was a hobby for gawking for those who had expansive areas in their homes to pursue this pursuit. Admittedly, this is only anecdotal evidence of the problem at hand, but it seems to tie in to other observations we have all probably had.



Nick Kallis

Nick has served on and off for many years as the layout tour coordinator for the Potomac Division. His LIRR Lower

Montauk Branch took the front cover of the September 2007 Railroad Model Craftsman. His current project is the Fn3 Oahu Sugar Company set in Waipahu which appeared on the cover of Narrow Gauge Down under. He has opened three layouts of his for the Potomac Division layout tour. He has attended two NMRA national conventions and one Narrow Gauge National Convention (Denver). He has earned a second and third NMRA AP awards. You may have seen his byline in the NMRA Magazine He has delivered several clinics about various model railroad topics. He resides in Virginia.