

THE MICRO MODEL RAILWAY DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway designer, builder and enthusiast
Issue 7. Winter 2022



Micro Layouts on Show!

Exhibition reports from shows big & small



THE DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway layout designer, builder and enthusiast

What a month that was! What's the old song? "I've been everywhere?" I think that's it. Over the past few weeks I feel as if I have been everywhere, and all for Micro layouts.

Over the years, many of my friends in the UK have asked what a US train show is like compared to a model railway exhibition. This autumn I have been in the position to attend three train shows of varying sizes from small town shows to Trainfest, the largest show in the US. I hope you'll enjoy the observations on the shows. Even though it's not a strictly micro layout centric article, micro layouts were found. With some great stories to boot.

Whenever I go to shows I'm always on the lookout for Micro Layout ideas even in the largest of displays.

The layouts may not always agree with my personal ideals but there's often something I can take away from a layout on show.

I have a personal announcement to share. At Christmas I am taking early retirement. I have earned it. It will mean no working on **The Dispatch** during lunchtimes and evenings. I can have a proper schedule to work on it. I have updated my LinkedIn entry to read "Model Railway Magazine editor". It has resulted in a different class of job suggestions...

I'll be able to read the hobby magazines and get more of a feel of what is going on out there. You may even see an improvement in the quality of the magazine as well. So keep the articles coming. We can make **The Dispatch** even better than it is now.

All this time means I will be able to work on my layouts too. In fact I have some project layouts lined up for next year for myself. Perhaps if you're interested they'll appear in these pages.

I hope that this special time of the year is filled with fun and enjoyment for you all.

Feel free to get in touch if you'd like to share something, layouts or ideas. You know the address, MMRDeditor@gmail.com

Contents

Gynthrolith Mine	2
<i>Gunther Kiltz' micro in the round.</i>	
Exploring Boxes	8
<i>Al Barten discusses boxes and baseboards for your Micro</i>	
Loading and Unloading	11
<i>Gunther Kiltz describes his layout's working features</i>	
Tipping Tales	15
<i>The editor recounts his successes and failures with tipping</i>	
Port Athree	18
<i>Al Barten's layout in a box lid</i>	
Twin Forks Industrial Park	21
<i>John Toth's micro is based on an old carendt.com plan</i>	
On The Road	23
<i>The editor was out and about spreading the micro layout word</i>	
Park Hall Halt	35
<i>Bob Hughes revisits a classic micro of his</i>	
The Christmas Dispatch	39
<i>The seasonal section</i>	
Snowvale	41
<i>Al Barten built a TTn3 Holiday scene.</i>	
Christmas Memories	44
<i>Seasonal model railway memories</i>	
Boxing Day	46
<i>Colin Peake tells us how to store your micro for the rest of the year</i>	
A Train Set For Christmas	48
<i>Danny Figg's Christmas Morning Micro</i>	
Fiddle Yard	52
<i>The editor looks forward to the introduction of TT:120</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

The Micro Model Railway Dispatch is designed, and edited by Ian Holmes for micro model railway enthusiasts. Copyright of the material rests with the original contributors. No copyright infringement is intended.

Gynthrolith Mine.

Günther Kiltz

Scale 09 7mm;ft 9mm track. Size:26'' x 26'' 65cm x 65cm approx.



The trees and mountain hide the circular nature of the track plan. A clever trick!

Some years ago I had changed from H0 to O scale (you do not get younger; the eyes do not get better). Since I have a considerable interest in industrial railways, I came to the idea to build such a railway in 09 scale. O.K. I know in 1:45 scale a gauge of 9 mm represents a prototype gauge of only 405 mm (16") and such a track width is very rare in Europe. On the other hand, the French Decauville company for example had built their first industrial railways with a gauge of 400 mm. No matter, there surely will be a prototype somewhere, and freelance building depends on believable excuses. Anyway, the smaller the gauge

the greater the fun (at least in my case) and with industrial railways nearly everything is possible. At the beginning, I had the idea of a simple track circle with some green stuff around it. However, I do not really like pizza layouts so I could not do that to myself. At least a light touch of meaningful operation should exist. This resulted in a mining micro layout. It is not that I have a special relationship to the mining industry, but bulk materials are easy to load and mines are good suppliers of that.

The operating concept is quite simple: the line winds up three quarters of the way around a small mountain to a dump bunker.



A birds eye view of the Gynthrolith Mine

It is assumed that the conveyor system filling the bunker is located inside the mountain, so nothing more of the mine is visible. Up here, the wooden tipper is loaded via a chute. There is only one tipper; the line simply is too short for more, because the total length is only 1.25m (4'). The loaded train runs down around the mountain and over a tiny bridge to the lower end of the line. Due to the small size of the layout, this is situated just below the bunker, but bushes and a tree hide the direct view. So, the illusion of a greater distance is created. The direction changes and the train runs over a turnout to a branch track above a stonewall. The load now is dumped via a chute into a truck below. The train

backs off and the same procedure can start again. To be honest, it is not really the most thrilling action but it is fun to play with and there is more sense in it than to just simply run around in circles.

The layout has an irregular basic form of approximately 65 cm (2' 1½") in diameter. The coarse shape of the landscape was sculpted from Styrofoam. Rocks were made from cork bark. For the more detailed modeling, I used homemade papier-mâché. Cardboard boxes for eggs were dissolved in water, squeezed out and mixed with white glue. After drying, this results in a very hard but light material.

The weight of the entire layout is just 2.5 kg (5½ lb.) The “gardening” was carried out in the classic way by electrostatically applied grass fibers, self-made trees of stuff from the accessories suppliers. Only the fir trees in the small forest came from the model shop. They actually are cheap H0 fir trees for the background. Enhanced with some more foliage and with extended trunks at two of them to get high firs, they look quite all right. Smaller stones and gravel were represented by gray cat litter. Spread on dry and sprinkled with thin glue, it results in a very rigid material and has a nice irregular color. For the track, rail profiles from size N flexible track were used, pre-bent and soldered onto copper-clad circuit

board pieces, which had been glued in place before. At two short parts of the line, wooden sleepers have been inserted for decoration. The rest of the track was embedded in fine sand.

A Roco H0e turnout was used for the junction to the branch track. It was considerably rebuilt, a slide switch was added to enable frog polarization, and a connecting wire was attached to the switch button to move the switch blades. To hide the mechanism, some logs were piled over with one of them operating the switch handle. Since there is no backside on the layout, I had to hide all the controls in the landscape.



Climbing up the mountain to the mine

The dump bunker was made from 1mm polystyrene sheets, covered with weathered coffee stirring sticks, my favorite planks. The floor runs obliquely downwards from the back to the front to enable the minerals to be discharged. The output is covered by a vertical sliding flap (1mm polystyrene), guided in U shaped profiles at the sides. It is operated by a brass lever which is moved by a rod that extends down under the layout. There a triangular deflection leads to a horizontal rod, which runs out to the landscape. Here again a log acts as a handle to open or close the bunker. A miner has his movable arm connected to the vertical rod so it looks

like he is opening the flap. For refilling, the roof is removable. It is made from plastic sheet covered with corrugated cardboard.

All lamps on the layout are tiny 12V bulbs with a diameter of 3mm. The lampshades were cut out from paper, bent to a cone shape and stabilized with CA adhesive. Lamp supports simply were formed from the connecting wires. The lantern besides the unloading chute was made the same way. The lamp post consists of a brass ballpoint refill (empty of course), which also serves as one of the electrical connections. All switches for the lamps are hidden in a box at the end of the line.



Getting ready to load up at the mine

When something is transported, it has to be unloaded again somewhere. This takes place at the branch track. Behind the dry-stone wall beneath the track, a similar mechanism to that of the dump bunker is installed. In this case, it works in the other direction and pushes up a rod between the rails to tilt the tipper. This time, the mechanism is not operated by a log but by a movable rock nearby. The guy with the pole in his hand is fixed to a vertical brass wire, which rotates in a brass tube underneath. A lever is attached to this wire and connected to the tilting mechanism. So, the worker turns simultaneously and it looks as if he is tipping the tipper with his pole.

All vehicles on the layout are self-made. Except for the chassis, everything was built from scratch.

To propel the locomotive I had an N scale chassis from Graham Farish in stock. I did not choose an explicit prototype for the model; it simply should look "industrial". The dimensions (not the appearance) were taken from the datasheet of an OME 117 built by Deutz. A good technician starts with a drawing (I am spoiled by my job). First, I sketched the chassis, and then I constructed the body around it. This gave me the templates for cutting the parts from 1mm polystyrene

sheet. The chassis originally came from a steam engine, I had to keep the side rods in place. They are the only propulsion of the rear axle. Furthermore, the wheels are a little too large so everything was hidden behind an outside frame. The false wheel bearings were assembled from miscellaneous plastic strips and some wire for the springs. The radiator grille was made from copper wire. Now only some minor parts were missing. Handles and door hinges from copper wire, Bosna couplers from Magic Train, "glass" in the windows, a little this and that in the cabin, that was it. To fix the body on the chassis I applied two small pieces of brass sheet at the front and the rear of the chassis, the last one with a hole. The front strip fits in a little pocket in the body, the rear one is screwed against a glued in nut. So, the chassis can easily be taken out for maintenance. A final coat of paint and of course a little rust and dirt here and there hides the sloppiness of the construction. The engine is operated analogically; with a pulse width controller and its 5-pole motor the handling and slow running characteristics are excellent.



Arrived at the bottom of the mountain ready to unload

A locomotive does not simply run around for fun. To fulfil its job, it needs something to pull (or push). So, a wooden box tipper was built. All required materials could be found in the scrap box: a few 0.5mm wooden strips, 4mm brass channel profile, polystyrene sheet and an old H0e bogie from which all unneeded “decorations” were cut off to keep only the wheel bearings. A new frame was soldered from the brass channel profile. The hinges for tilting the trough were made from 1.2mm dia. brass tube and a piece of wire. To improve stability the bottom of the trough was made from 0.5mm polystyrene and got a planking and side walls from wooden strips. The front wall was built separately for it should open for unloading. For this

purpose, it is attached to two polystyrene angles. The exact dimensions were checked out by a drawing on the computer. The angles pivot on short pieces of wire, which had been glued into the bulkheads at the appropriate places. To open the front wall, two wire levers are attached left and right which are guided by short pieces of wire at the frame and the angles. When tilting the trough, the levers pull up the front wall and the load can be discharged. Finally, two self-made buffers, some small plastic channel profiles on the outside walls for decoration, a little paint, rust and dirt were applied and the tipper was ready for operation.



Ready to supervise the unloading



The foam base that forms the mountain



The tipper mechanism working (head to page 9 for more on Günther's working tippers)

When the loco and wagon reach the bottom of the mountain the wagon needs to be unloaded, a truck is a good idea. I decided not to build one from scratch but to modify an existing model. An American breakdown truck was found on the Christmas market for just 5 Euro. This made the perfect base. The vehicle proved to be extremely dismantling-friendly: you just had to loosen two screws at the bottom and it literally fell apart into all its parts. The plastic frame was cut off behind the driver's cab and a new, longer frame made from brass channel profiles was attached. Dismantling the pullback driving mechanism provided the rear axle, the fenders were cut off from the old body and everything was attached to the new frame. The new body got a piece of plastic sheet as a base. The side walls were made from wooden coffee stirring sticks and "decorated" with a few narrow plastic channel profiles. A toolbox on the left side and the tank on the right side conceal the emptiness inside the frame. After grinding off the old paint and the stickers, a few bumps were milled into the front fenders, and the radiator grille got some bends. Finally, a new (not too careful) painting followed and of course a lot of rust and dirt. The remaining parts were disposed of in the scrap box and the truck was ready for its job at the mine.

One question remains: what is Gynthrolith? Well, it is a very valuable mineral, which is urgently needed in the production of... that is nonsense of course! I did not want to take anything that really exists. At exhibitions, this only leads to the situation that sooner or later some "I know everything better" guy comes up, explaining long and chatty: "I was in the mining industry myself and there everything was different at all and especially this mineral was not mined in this way and ... and ... and...".

To avoid that, a fantasy name was needed, which somehow would sound like a mineral. Therefore, I just derived it from my first name Günther (in German language the y, when used as vowel, is spoken the same way like the ü).

And the mined and tipped material. What is it really? I tested several different materials and ended up with hemp seeds just by chance. Industrial hemp, of course, the stuff you use for making ropes and which has nothing to do with hashish. It is available as bird feed, is not too heavy and trickles well out of the bunker or out of the tipper. In addition, it has a rather suitable color and can act quite well as a bulbous mineral. As mentioned at the beginning: Freelance model building depends on believable excuses.

Exploring Boxes.

Al Barten

Working with boxes for micro layout baseboards

Designing and building are my favorite parts of model railroading. Unfortunately the ideas for a layout come faster than my ability to carry them out, so working in compact format suits me perfectly. Lately I've been working with boxes. Aside from the challenge, boxes keep things compact and tidy, meaning they are easily stored and transported. It's also possible to finish one in short order.

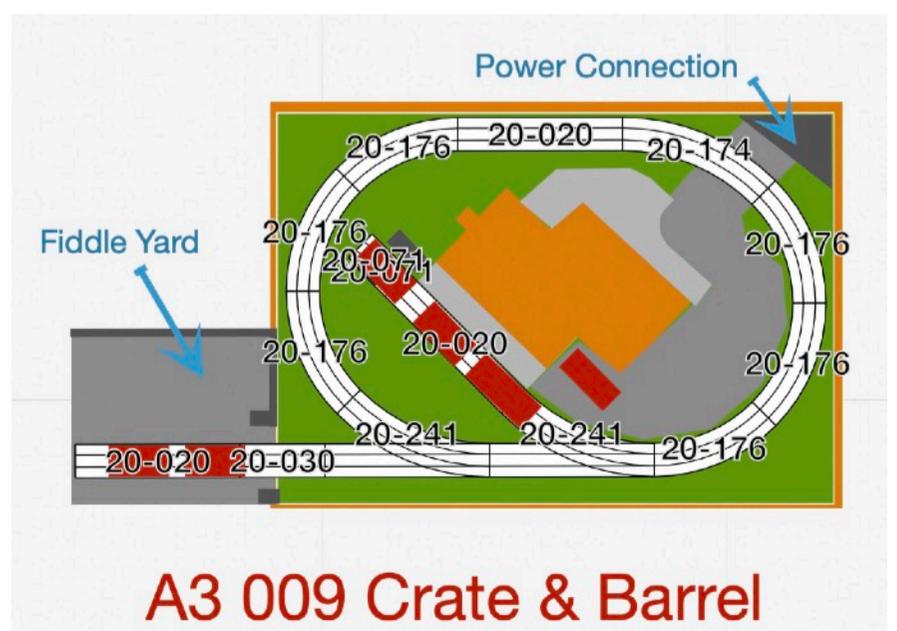
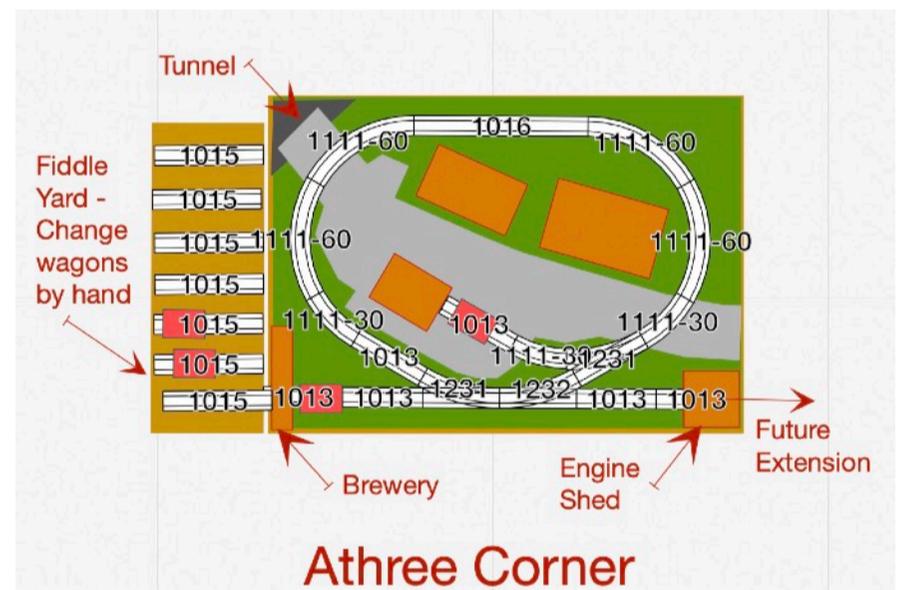
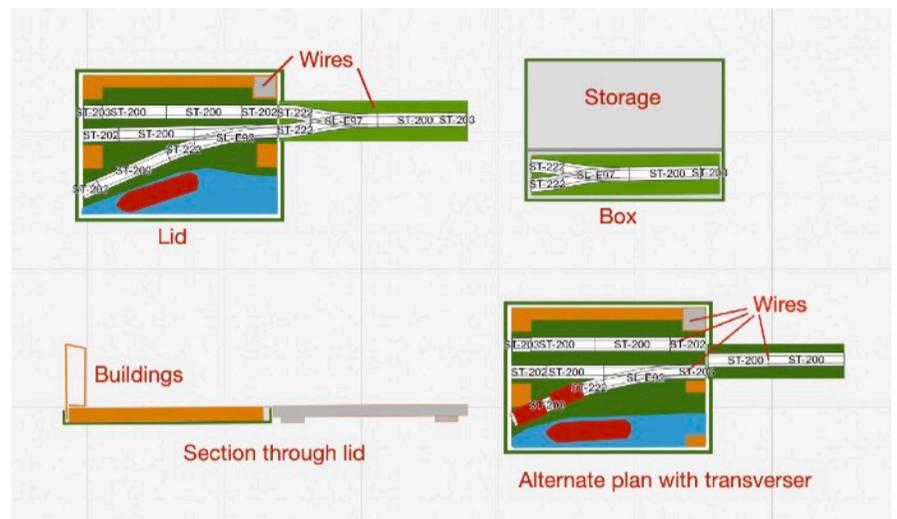
I've confined my attention to two specific boxes: the trusty A4 Boxfile with flip top, and the A3 box with separate lid. The first has interior dimensions of 9.5" x 12.5" and the latter has 12.75" x 16.75". I prefer the A3 and have completed two layouts and started a third in the past three or four months. The first, Port Athree, is an Inglenook shunting type using a traverser for the head shunt. The second, Athree Corner, is a roundy featuring 103mm radius curves. The third, Woodson Crate & Barrel, is also a roundy, but using 117mm radius curves and a simple design. All are in 009 scale, though one could consider them also in H0e and TTn3.

Each layout has a particular approach to its design. Port Athree is built on the box lid, saving the box base for storage of the controller, transverser, backdrop panels, and other removable items. The box can also be used as a fiddle yard, though I have not gone in that direction yet. The layout is stored upside down when the lid is in place on the box.

Athree Corner is designed as a roundy, a challenge given by my partner, Heather. I experimented with Kato Unitrack (117mm curves) and Tomix N (103mm curves). I already had all the Tomix track I needed and liked the fact that I could get more into the plan. I found that Kato 11-109 chassis could handle the tight radius when pulling N gauge wagons. That's all I needed to go with Tomix. Woodson Crate & Barrel is designed for simplicity and reliability. In essence it's a prototype for similar designs I might build for auction at our local trolley museum. It's built on the box lid to avoid having to include background scenery.

Along the way I explored various design possibilities using RailModeller Pro. (I haven't tried any other programs of this kind, so I can't evaluate vs others.) The app gives me access to just about every line of track out there. Of course it's all

prefab snap track, but given the circumstances, that's what I use anyway.

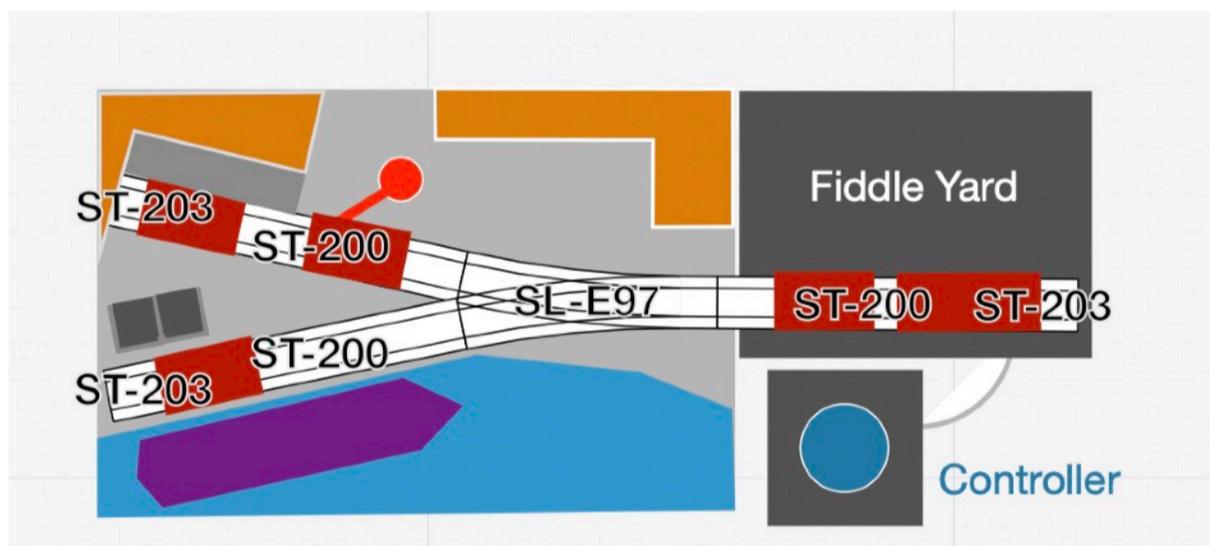


I think the various screen shots are self explanatory. They represent what I look for in a layout; not necessarily what others are looking for. There's no right or wrong here. I'm just apologizing for what many might consider a narrow focus.

My main purpose in this article was to share my sketches, but the layouts I built can offer some reality. The biggest headache I found has been with couplings. The common Bemo couplers are not working very well with the two roundy layouts. Fortunately, the Kato chassis come with Rapidos, which do work on the tight curves. Attaching Rapidos (Elsie's according to Peco), are hard to install on Dundas kits in a way that produces reliable operation. It's hit or miss and readjusting (removing and re-gluing). Lately I've gone to taking commercial N gauge wagons and building new outer shells to slip over them. Since they come with Rapidos, they generally work fine. So far I've built some 4-plank opens and they are very easy to make. I also found that trains had some difficulties when backing into sidings with the Tomix 103mm curves, but not the Kato 117mm. Some Tomix turnouts are flawless in that regard, and others not. The Bemo

couplings, while OK in pulling direction, do not take backing into sidings very well, usually derailing in either radius.

Perhaps a word or two about operation. All the designs have some sort of operating idea behind them, some very simple; others more challenging. We all have our preferences. For example, I've built Inglenook layouts and created wagon cards, but in the end was happy to just move the trains back and forth for a few minutes at a time. For years I had a Z gauge train running around the base of my computer monitor, with only a station to stop at. I was happy with it. As a boy I used to watch the New York Central change locomotives at Harmon, NY, where my father commuted from every day. I would get to the station early and watch the steam or diesel loco come from the yard, cross the mainline over a bridge, pull down to the station and then move forward to wait for the incoming train. The train would arrive, the electric loco uncouple and move onto a siding, and the new loco back onto the train. That's an operation I never tired of. I tried to simulate that with my American Flyer layout Dad let me build in one stall of the garage.

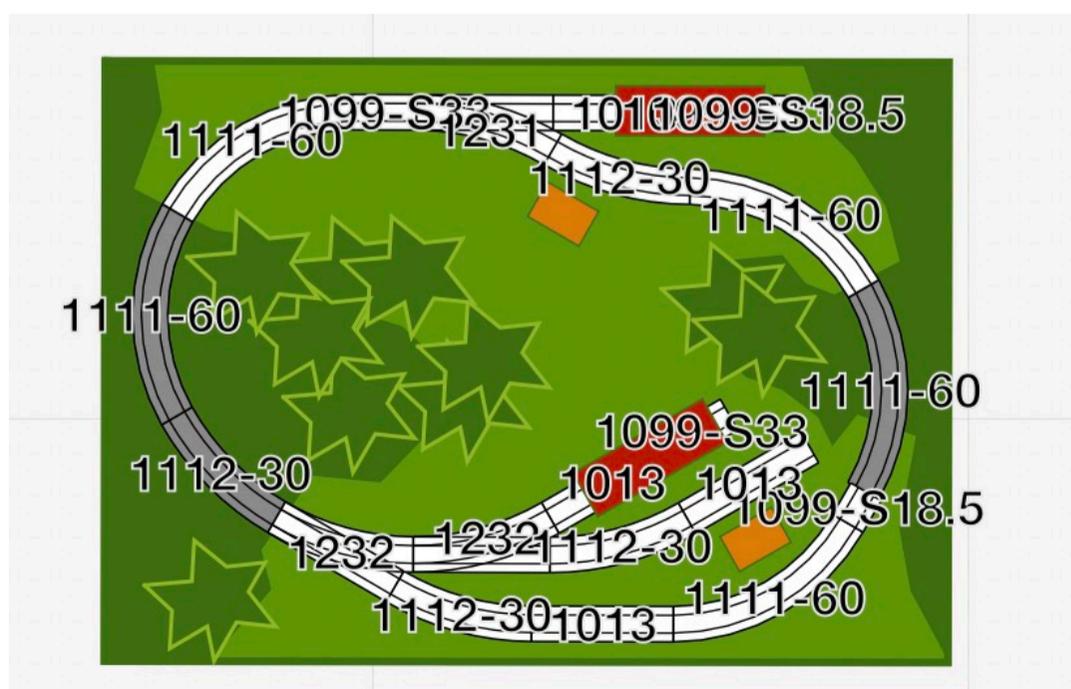


A4 OO Canal Fork

*A4 Boxfile layout 9.5" x 14.5"
PECO H0 Streamline track
Electrofrog turnout*

A3 009 Steam Tram

*Continuous and point to point
009 Steam trams or N scale tram
A3 Box file 12" x 17"
Tomix N track 103mm curves*



Loading and Unloading.

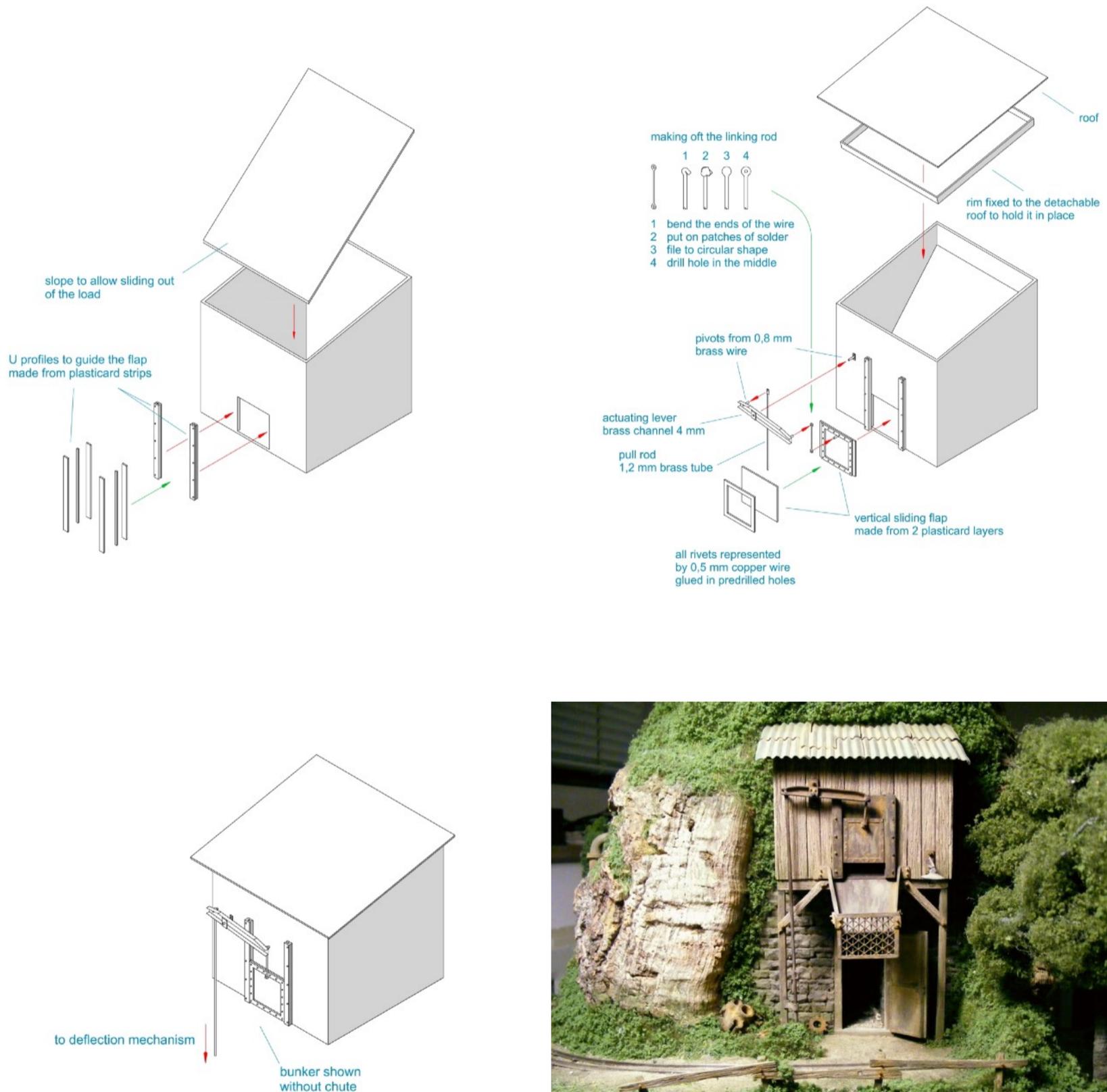
Günther Kiltz

How to make working features for your Micro

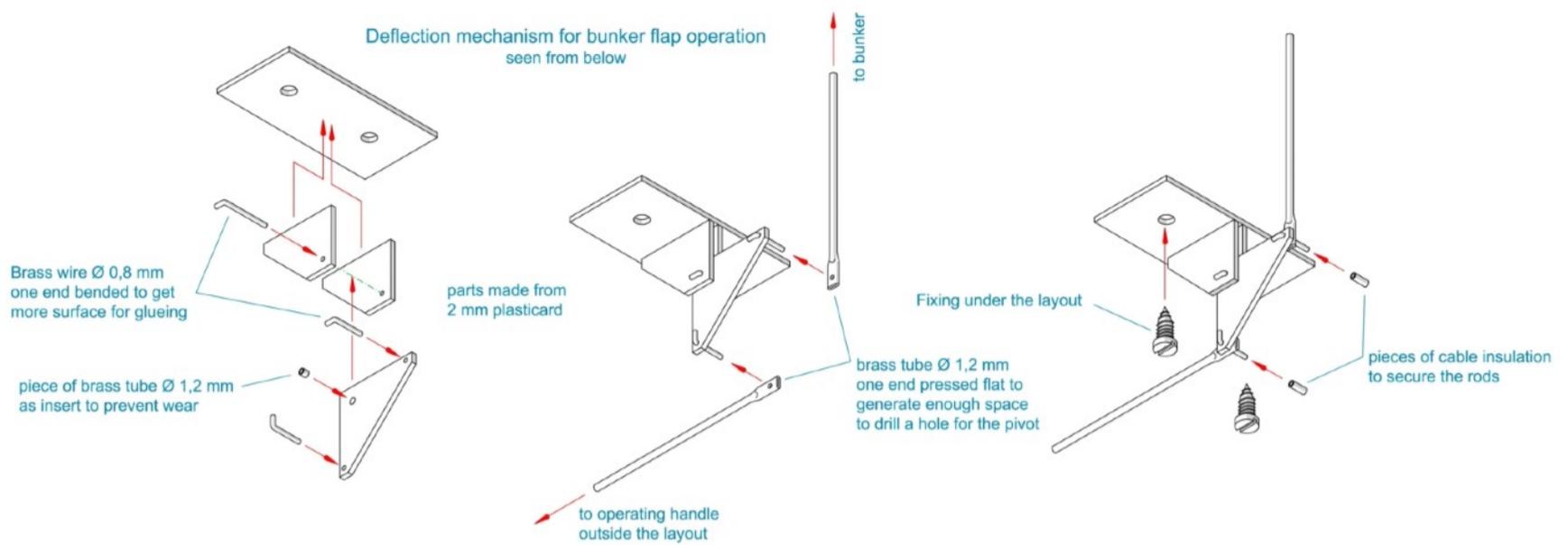
On my layout “Gynthrolith Mine” I installed a bunker for the mined ore. It is equipped with a working, vertical sliding flap to load the tipper. Here I will tell you how the bunker and the mechanism of this flap were constructed.

The backside of the bunker sits inside the rock; the front is supported by two posts, made from large matches. Its core consists of 1 mm polystyrene

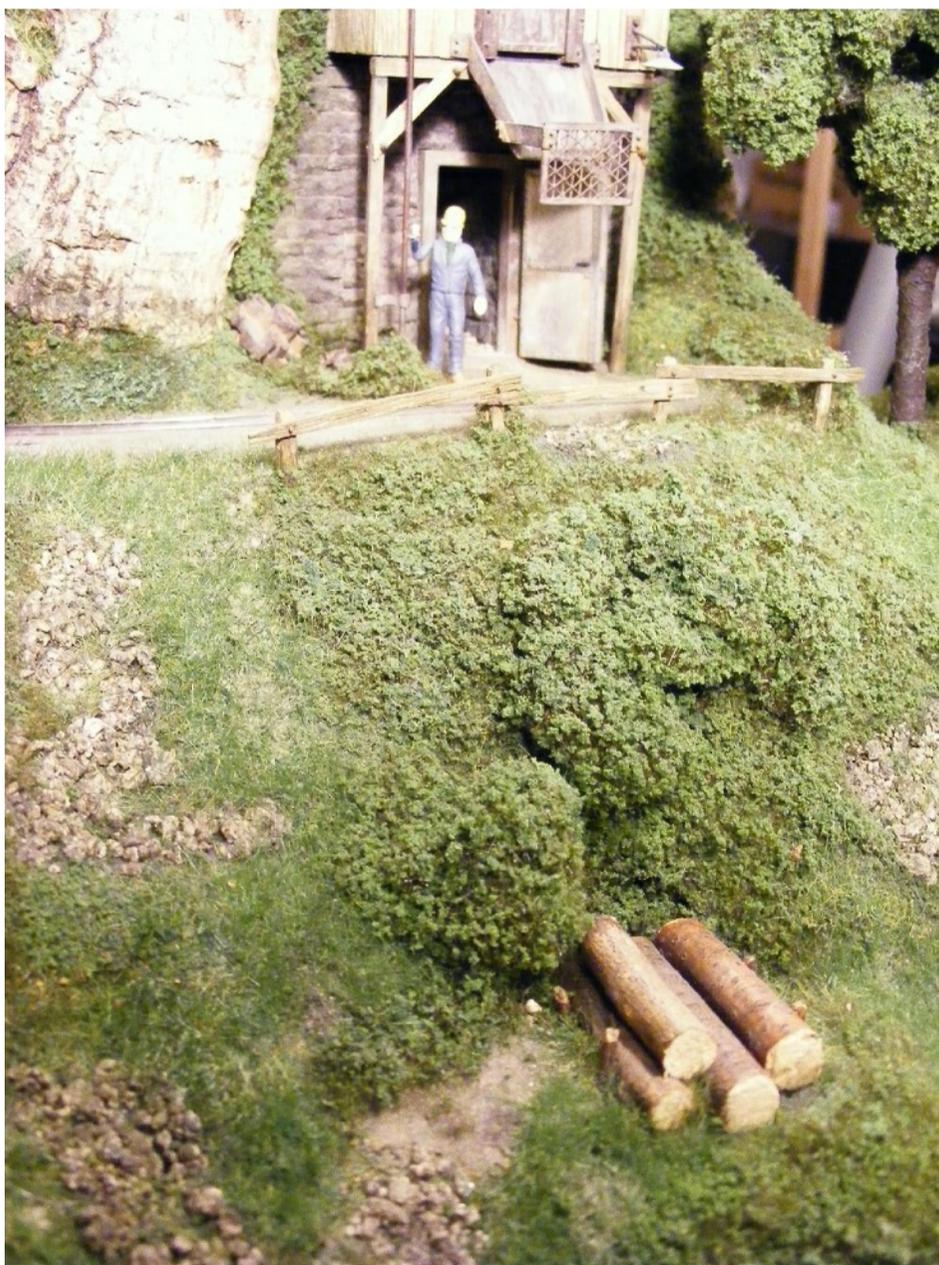
sheet. The outside is clad with wooden coffee stirrers. The detachable roof is covered with corrugated cardboard from the hobby shop. Inside, I installed a slope from back to front to enable the load to slide out. To guide the flap, two U shaped profiles were made from plasticard strips.



These sketches show how the flap and the opening mechanism were constructed.



The vertical rod is running down under the surface of the layout, the transit is hidden by a little bush. Here a deflection mechanism is situated which changes the pulling direction from vertical to horizontal.

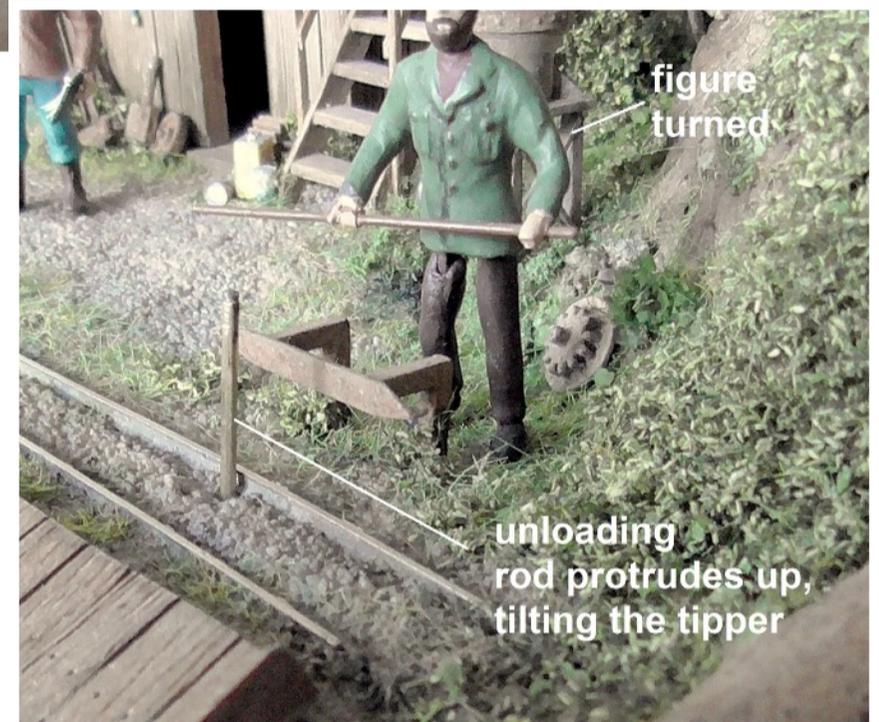


At the left here, you can see the bush at the workers feet, where the actuating rod disappears into the ground

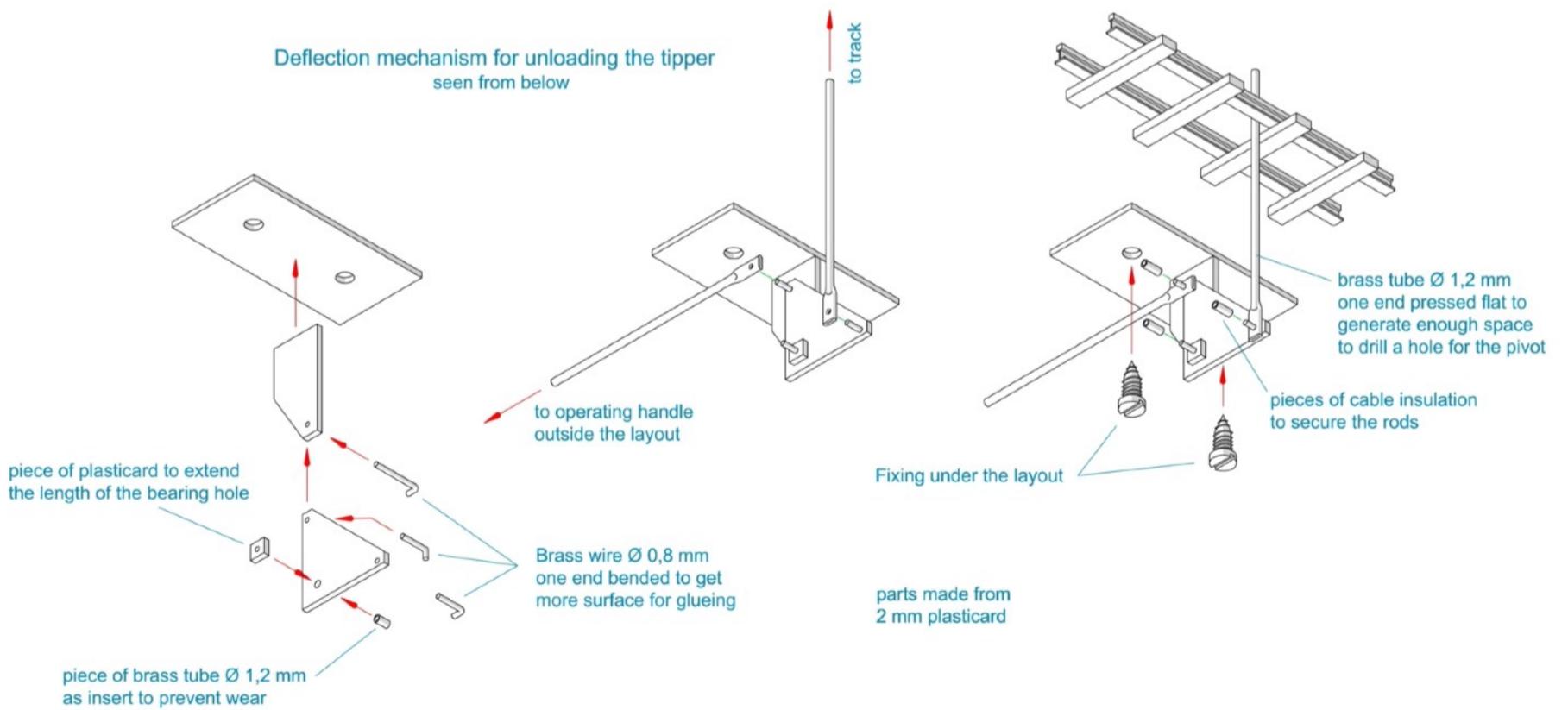
To operate the whole mechanism, a pile of logs was set up on the outside. The right hand log is connected to the horizontal rod and acts as handle. Pulling opens, pushing closes the flap. A worker with a movable right arm was connected via a handle to the vertical rod. When the flap is opened, it looks as if he is pulling the rod.



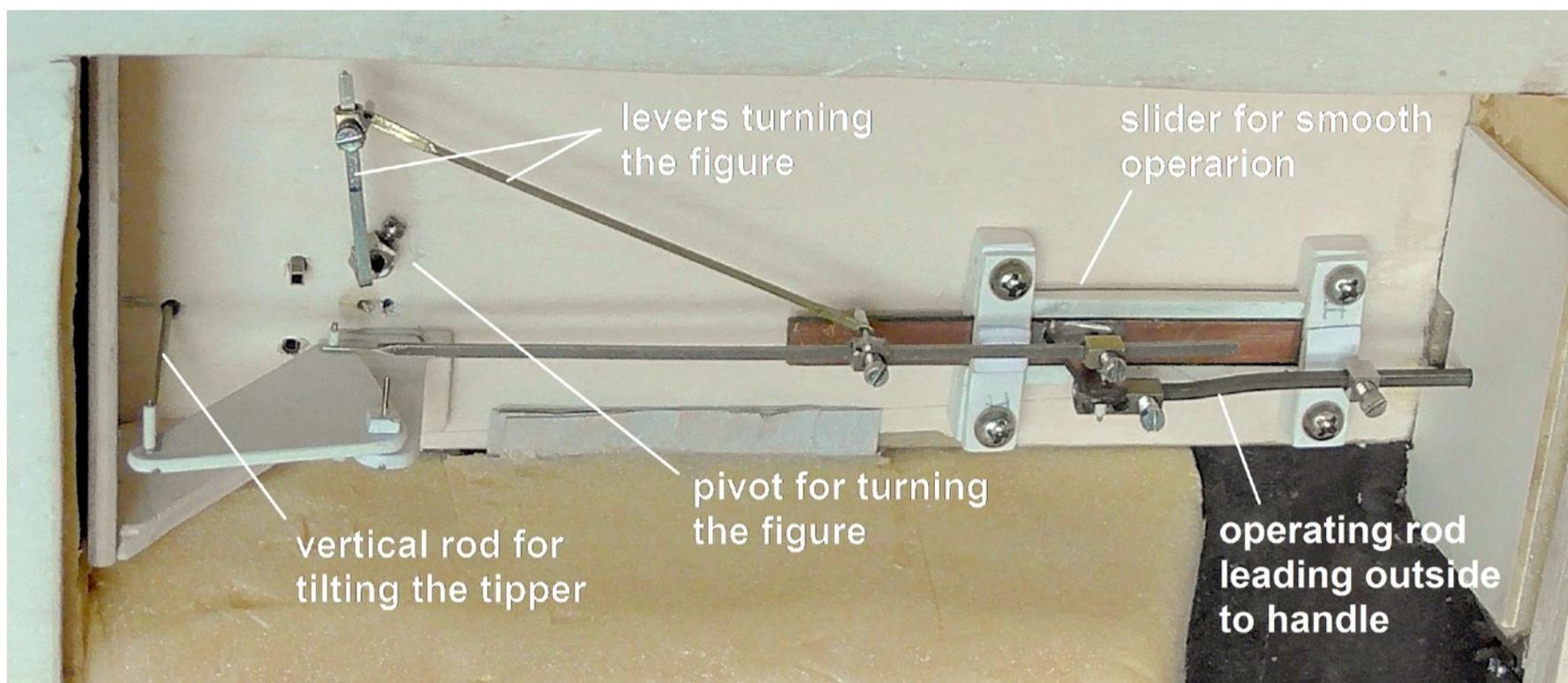
To unload the tipper, a similar mechanism is used. But this time it works the other way. Instead of pulling a rod down, it pushes a rod up between the rails.



The figure is fixed on a wire, which runs down to the construction. When the tipper is unloaded, the worker is turned simultaneously. This looks as if he is tilting the tipper.



This sketch explains the construction. Only the tilting parts are shown.



The complete operating mechanism.



View of the back of the layout. The golden knob on the left is the handle. Pulling out unloads the tipper.



To prevent the tipper from tilting over during unloading, a brass wire bow is soldered to the backside of the wagon frame. This slides under that rusty rack in front of the workers feet. So the tipper is secured when the trough creates overweight to the front when tilted.

Editor says:

When Günther sent me his article about his Squarefoot mine (Summer issue) I immediately recognised his work. Several years ago he had a layout featured on Carendt.com called Gynthrolith Mine. I admire this layout greatly and would like to build my own take on the concept, so I immediately asked him if he'd write an article on it. He very

kindly agreed and was also kind enough to write this piece about his layout's working features. His layouts are so simple, but are lifted above the ordinary by the use of working features. That is something I believe in, and Günther's layouts are the perfect example.

Tipping Tales.

Ian Holmes

The editor describes his travails with tippers

Reading Günther's article about his working tipper mechanisms, put me in mind to describe my own, far simpler methods of incorporating the feature.

My attempts have often been trial and error, and never involved fancy levers and pulleys like Günther's creations. Instead I prefer to follow the "KISS" mantra. Keep It Simple, Stupid.

I have made several tipping mechanisms to fill open wagons or hoppers. The first was on my British Oak coal loader, based on the screens at Crigglestone. I made it up as I went along. It was quite successful and people would stop by the layout at shows and watch intently as each wagon was filled. However, the loading chute was slightly off centre and some of the tipping material would find its way onto the

track, causing stock to derail. I'd have to stop operating the layout every 90 minutes or so to clear the track under the loader chute. The layout was a feature of Midwestern train shows for at least five years and has now been refurbished, incorporating things that have been learned over the years.



The first version of "British Oak". There is a loading chute in each of the buildings. The one in the building nearest the camera was the one that was used all the time. The one in the rearmost structure was actually fed through the small square tube that you can see between the buildings. It was too narrow and not steep enough to be able to tip anything down. Lesson learned: even the principal chute had to have a "shover" (see inset picture) to push the material down the slope just a little bit. It was an effect I liked. For when you watched the wagon being filled close up, it made it look like an unevenly loaded conveyor belt was tipping into the wagon.

Less successful tippers were used on my H0 scale layout based on the Superior Graymont Limestone plant. Here the stone material bounced out of the wagons being loaded and ended up inside the workings of the layout power pack, causing the buttons and control dial to seize up. How that happened? I have no idea.

On an On30 layout I was working on, I couldn't even get the wagons to fill. The slope of the tipper chute wasn't steep enough to overcome gravity and the loads just sat on the chute...

That is probably the most important thing I learned from this progress, you have to overcome gravity, and with the test version of the tipper that I built for my now abandoned Cuddle tribute, I created my most successful tipper yet. Not only did it tip perfectly, it also tipped the correct amount into the wagons.

In order to overcome gravity your tipper needs a steep gradient, more than 60 degrees from horizontal. There is pretty much no mass in model ballast, or whatever you decide to tip, so it needs every bit of help it can get.

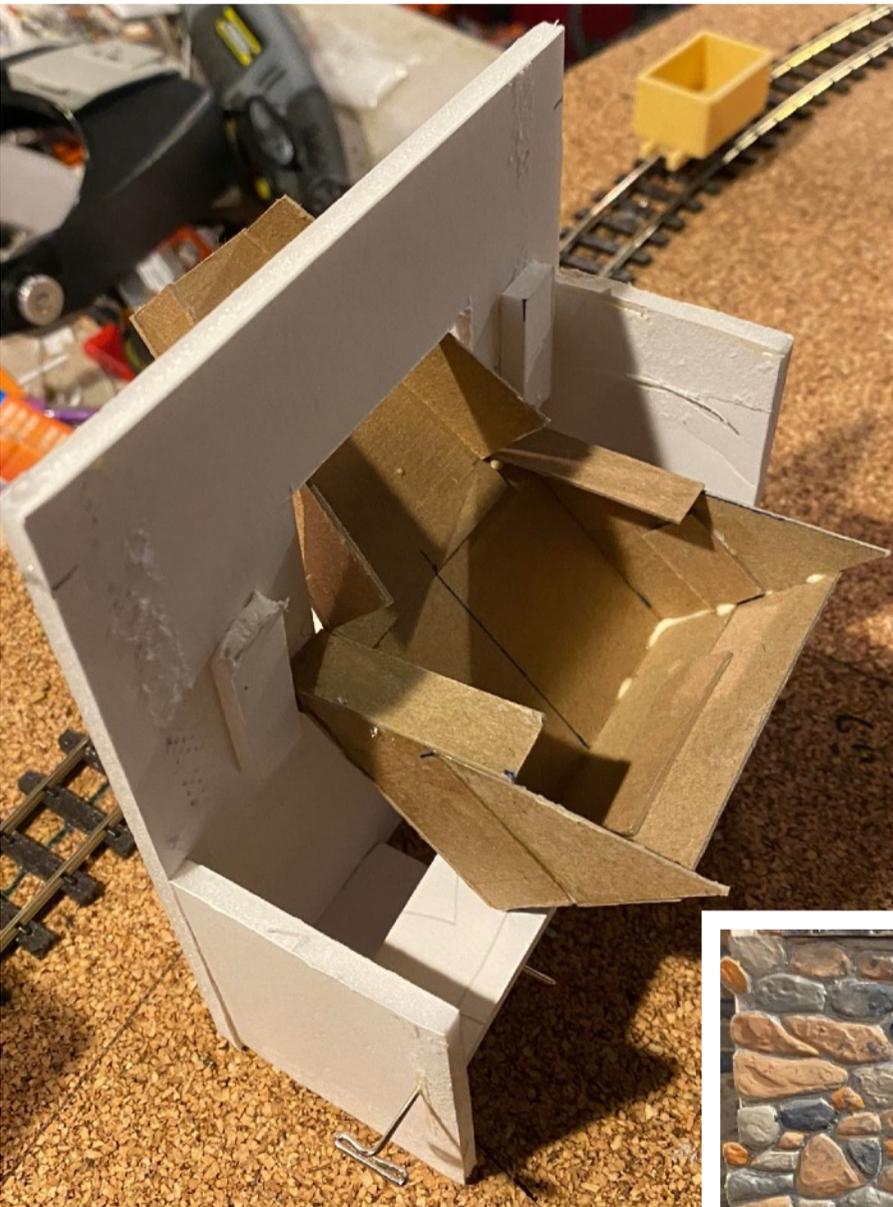
Secondly, the distance from the end of your chute to the base of the wagon should be as little as possible. Model tipping material likes to bounce out of the wagons and onto the track to cause derailments. The shorter the distance, the less the bounce. Another dodge is to install a false floor in the wagons. That means you also use less material to fill a wagon. Some kind of curtain around the chute also helps to stop tipping material from bouncing out of the wagons.



Let's be honest, Superior Graymont Limestone looks pretty impressive. I think it's the most impressive set of structures I've ever built. However, filling the wagons using the tower on the left was a total failure. Quite how material managed to bounce out of the hoppers and into the layout controller is beyond me. Proving for once, that if anything can happen, it will. The layout lasted one show.

As you can see, the On30 loader fared far, far worse. The bases of the loading bins were quite steeply inclined but once the material got onto the shallower slope of the chute, it mostly just stopped there. Another failure. This layout never went to a show.





The tipper developed for my Cuddle tribute project was a success. The loading chute had to be moveable to empty into a wagon and raise up to clear a locomotive as it went by (as pointed out by the Preiser G scale figure in the photographs). I exploited this to load the wagon. The chute has a bucket the same size as the skip on the other end. When the chute is rotated downwards the entire load of the bucket is emptied into the skip. There was minimal overspill onto the track



Port Athree.

Al Barten

009 4mm scale, 9mm gauge. 16.75" x 12.75" 425mm x 323mm



Port Athree a delightful place to watch the trains

A layout in a box is an intriguing thought. But then, compact design has always been an interest of mine. As a boy I was jealous of my friend's captain's bed with underneath storage. I marveled at the space saving ingenuity of the roomettes in the Pullman cars we sometimes traveled in. And of course today's tiny houses always bring a smile. Seeing on YouTube what others were doing with boxes of various sizes and origins to house layouts, I decided to give it a try.

Initially Port Athree was intended to be in OO gauge and could be but when I discovered 009 I decided to give that format a try. So far so good. Port Athree could be any place in the UK that has a harbor. I envision it as part of a proposed but never built narrow gauge railway on the Isle of Skye. I have a sketch for a similar layout using a ferry boat in place of the pier.

Port Athree is built in an A3 box by Bigso Sverker, purchased via Amazon. Its interior dimensions are 12.75" x 16.75" by 3.25" deep. I broke from convention and built it in the lid rather than the box. When stored, the layout is upside down.

The idea is that the box can be used to store the controller, traverser, and other removable elements. At the same time there's room enough to allow a two track fiddle yard extension from the layout, were I to take that route.

In operation, the layout is an Inglenook shunting layout, though the traverser, which is the head shunt, at just under 9 inches is not quite long enough to qualify as a full fledged Inglenook. Still, it can handle a four wheel loco and two four wheel wagons.

Everything is manually operated-the single Peco electrofrog switch, the traverser, and uncoupling. The deep sea fishing kiosk and surrounding sidewalk lift off as a unit, providing access to a terminal strip through which the various wires are connected. The controller is a Rokuhan Z gauge controller and attaching wires are all Rokuhan snap fittings for easy assembly/disassembly.



The background panels were made in quick fashion just to get the layout running. Someday I may rebuild them to reflect the more colorful facades I saw some years ago when visiting the Scottish islands. The ones I used are cut from a set of printed building fronts, glued to heavy card backing with UHU glue stick and secured top and bottom on the back with tape. I had to order the 4 mil card from the UK.

Traversers are commonly used in shunting layouts, but I'm often left wondering how to make one. So this was a trial and error experiment conducted before I committed to the layout. It begins by using the space between the box lid side and the inner wood frame (built to ensure a space for the box sides to fit into), about 1/4" wide. The end of the traverser turns down into the space, and the unit slides along from one position to the other. Since my traverser only serves two tracks, all I need is a stop at each position. Just slide the traverser to the stop and everything is aligned. The traverser itself is powered, so there is no need to make an electrical

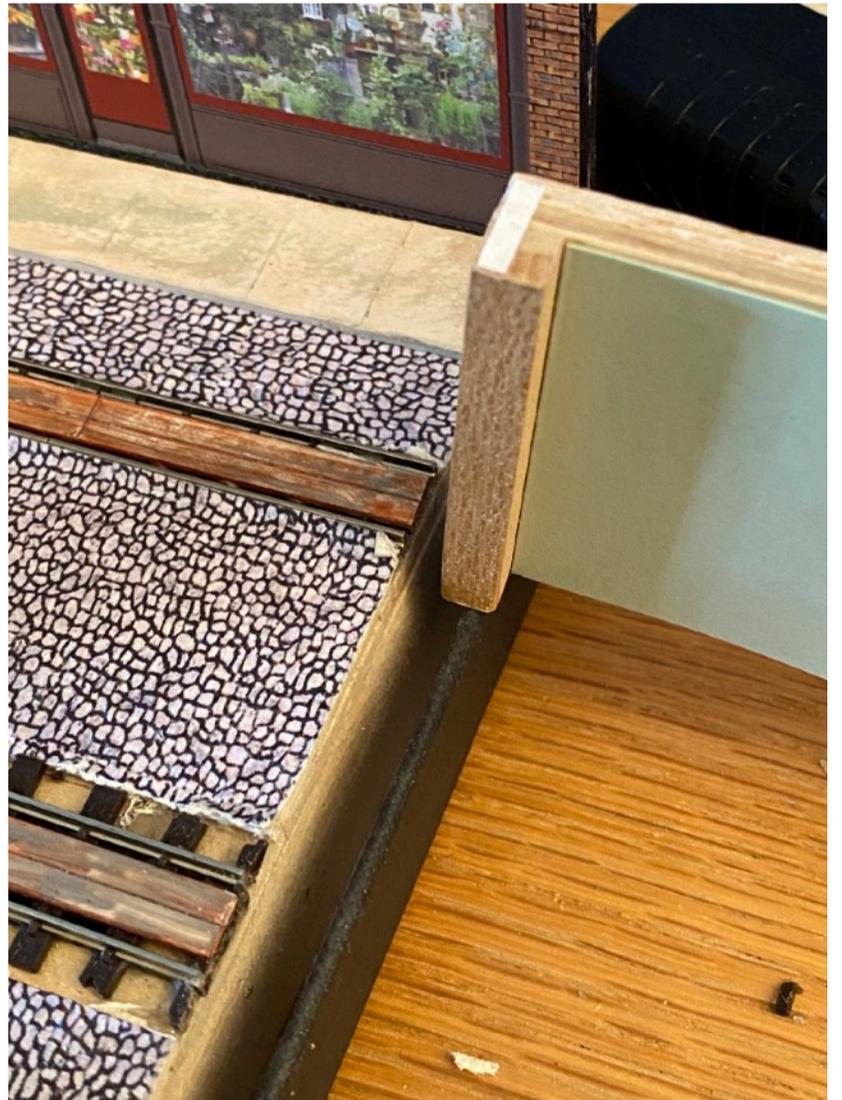
connection at the rails.

If I were to forgo being able to store the traverser in the box, I would rebuild it longer and use bridge trestle sides for a better appearance.

Just about any 009/HOe rolling stock can work on Port Athree. I could even use N scale by changing the buildings and the fishing boat. The one limitation is caused by the length of the traverser. As such, I'm only using 4 wheeled stock, RTR and kit built. I have one Minitrains RTR loco, a Riesa 0-4-0 and several 3D printed steam and diesel locos mounted on Kato 11-109 chassis. They all run beautifully.

For uncoupling, I fashioned a hockey stick shape from an old credit card and use it to lift the couplings from the side.

Port Athree could be treated as a modular layout or simply expanded to provide more shunting capabilities. Or ... it could remain as is. So far I'm happy as is, and I'm off building a sequel.



Twin Forks Industrial Park.

John Toth

N scale 33" x 10" 840mm x 250mm



The simple trackplan provides a lot of operation.

The Twin Forks Industrial Park, while not my first attempt at a micro layout is my first success at one. I have built it over the course of about a year. The TFIP is freelanced though my general vision is that it was a New York Central branch line that was built during the 1920s when a much larger yard and the twin forks power plant were built. The TFIP is situated west of them. The primary industries are the twin forks team track and Nathans & Co. which was built as a small outdoor repair shop for rail equipment during the 1920s but eventually became a construction distribution company the 1980s. In 1986, however, after a decline under Conrail, the Hartford and Eastern Railway - a fictitious short line - would take over the branch. The HERR works the branch to this day with a jumble of ex-Norfolk and Western and Conrail equipment. I am currently trying to run either 1950s under the NYC or 1980s under the HERR.

The bench work of the TFIP is made of an old wall frame that I simply put plywood on. The dimensions are 10x33 inches plus a 1x1 foot fiddlestick that I occasionally use. The TFIP is designed to fit in a Tupperware container for easy storage and transport.

The track plan is an exact copy of Carl Arendt's Weymouth. The track is Kato Unitrack with NCE DCC for power and control. The layout was first designed for DC operation with a Kato power pack, and my Atlas SD35.

The primary DCC motive power for the TFIP is a BLI NYC 4-6-2 and a Bachmann SD9. The rolling stock is primarily Micro-Trains while I also have Atlas and Bluford Shops equipment.

When operating the TFIP I primarily use a reusable switch list, though I find great enjoyment in just shuffling cars around.

Most scenery is Woodland Scenics, the main exception that I used 500 grit sandpaper for the roads to the construction distributor. The backdrop is a grey posterboard and the buildings are from Scalescenes.

At the end of the day, I feel the TFIP is an attempt to model a line in its entirety of the time it would have existed, from the NYC in the 1950s through Penn Central, Conrail and eventually the HERR in the mid to late 1980's. The TFIP has constantly changed based on what I think looks, sounds, or feels right. Which I subjectively think is an incredibly fun way to enjoy the hobby.





A selection of Wintry scenes on the TFIP. Excuse me, I need to get my coat and warm up with a cup of coffee, brrr.





A sign to a Train show in the middle of nowhere. It could only be in the Midwest.

Usually, Autumn in Minnesota presents me with just one model train show to attend, the Granite City Train Show in St. Cloud. But this year, I found myself deluged with show invites, and plenty of opportunities to spread the micro layout word, all leading up to the appearance of my British Oak APA Box layout at Trainfest in Milwaukee.

The preceding months had been spent refurbishing the layout so its appearance at a show in Randolph, MN was a chance to iron out the kinks and see how everything worked. It turned out to be a great weekend. I spent quite some time chatting with show goers about the micro layout concept. Several people were interested enough to make a note of the magazine website and it resulted in at least one new subscriber.

Great pride was taken in meeting Dr. Ed Buchwald, Emeritus Professor of Geology at Carleton College, and like me, a micro layout enthusiast. He had been showing micro layouts at the Randolph show for 15 years or so, thinking he was the only person interested in this branch of model railways in the area. I was happy to dispel those thoughts, and honoured when he asked me to sign one of my

contributions to one of Carl's books on micro layouts.

Just as rewarding an experience was had when a father asked if I would test run a train his son had bought. The child had a developmental delay and the look of joy on the boy's face as the loco sprung to life and ran along the track was something to behold. The whole day was pretty special.

I didn't know what to expect from this little show in the middle of nowhere. But I really enjoyed the atmosphere. It was most definitely akin to a small British show with a high ratio of layouts (11) to traders (7 or 8). It made me feel a little homesick for the model railway world back home.



Dr. Buchwald and his layout

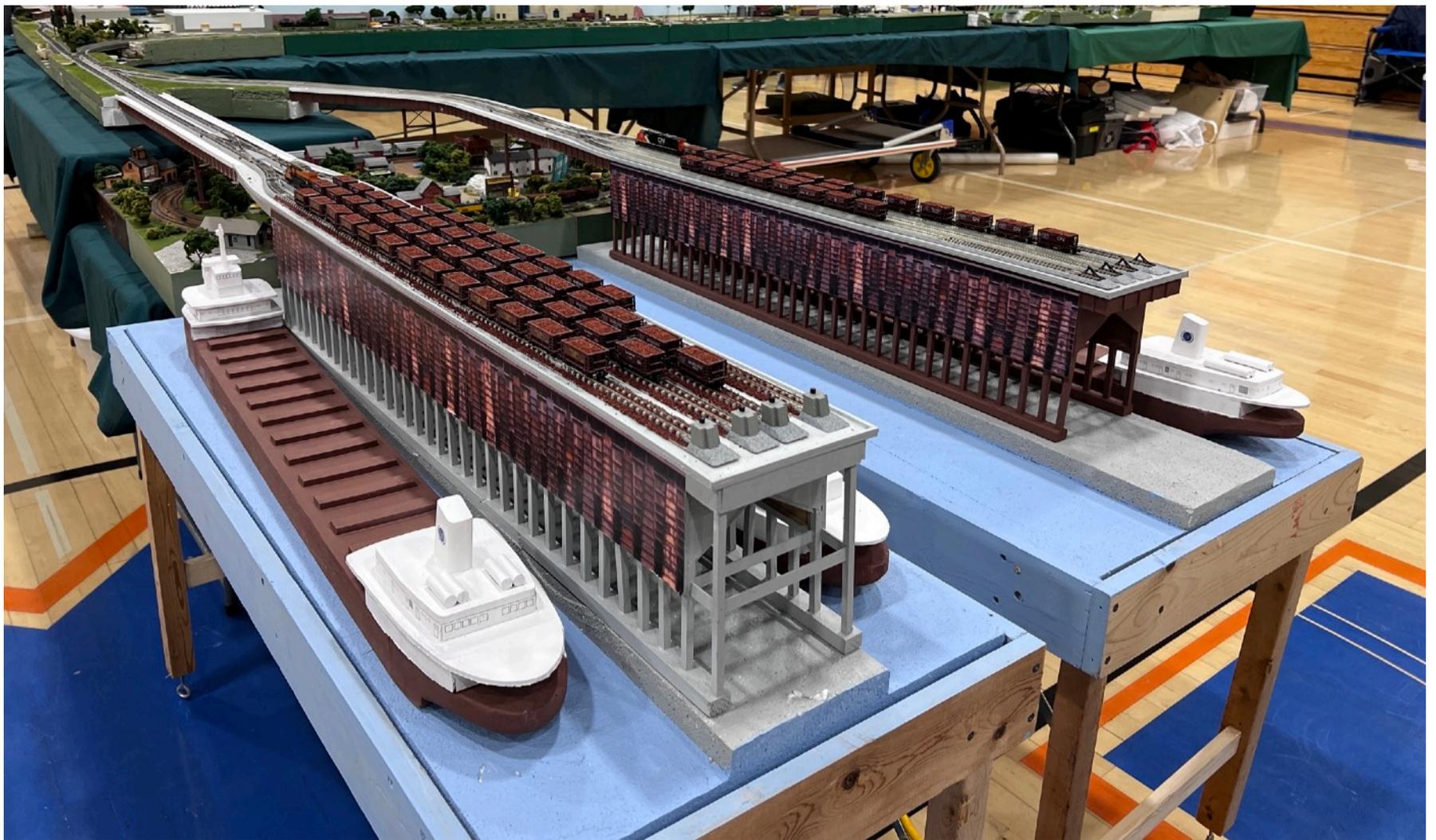


A two day show gave the chance to test my American stock and English stock, running one day of each over the two day show. Overall, I found the English stock easier to use, the bogie wheel sets of the Ore Jennies being particularly awkward to work with. The hoppers also seemed to fill easier and there was less spillage as a result.

Eagle eyed inspection of the photographs will reveal the damage to the elevated walkway around the structures. Oops. Something else to repair before the next show.



The main hall was filled with layouts in three rail O scale, H0 scale, N gauge and a large working display from the Minnesota Garden Railway Society.



This was an element of the Great River Valley System N scale layout that I thought warrants further exploration on a Micro. The Modelling of the Ore docks (top picture) was an outstanding feature. But what really grabbed my attention was the way that a set of T-Track modules have been sited underneath the approach to the ore docks. Though the modules only outlined a small oval it created the atmosphere of the area. A location I am very familiar with. Something for a micro modeller to think about in an industrial location.



A couple of views of Ed Buchwald's On30 3-2-2 Inglenook Micro. The star of the show for me. The use of full size O gauge wagons against the narrow gauge is a very nice touch, that emphasizes how small narrow gauge trains can be compared to standard gauge.



This set of N scale modules showed some nice track planning elements that would work in a micro layout context



Next up, The Granite City Train show in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. It is the show that I have been attending the most since moving to the USA. I must have been attending the show for 15 to 20 years. I've brought many different layouts in many different scales, and always had a good time. Everyone is so friendly. I invariably end up being interviewed on the local radio station that broadcasts reports from the show throughout the morning. I talk micro layouts as much as the interviewer lets me.

This year's show was not typical compared to other years. There was a clash with a train show at Canterbury Park about an hour away. More of the traders were attracted to that show as it was the one with more money behind it, held at a major facility in the Twin Cities. To be honest though, that show has always been a big disappointment when I have visited there in previous years.

Despite all my efforts over the years plugging micro layouts, no-one has been inspired enough to show

one themselves here. I guess I must work harder at that.

The show was probably the worst from a layout performance point of view that I have ever had. In all my years exhibiting I have never had any wiring come loose. At this show, I had to solder two wires back. There were many other niggles with baseboard joins and the layout staying level. All problems that I'd never had in all my years of showing this layout. There is lots of work to do to get things back to the smooth running of the Randolph show. If it hadn't been for my fun little 'Neath the Christmas Tree layout, the show would have been a total failure. Though I did put out quite a few business cards for **The Dispatch** and the vast majority of those were taken, and several other people took a picture of the poster I had on the fiddle yard screen publicising **The Dispatch**. So that's something of a positive sign, I suppose.



River's Edge Convention Centre Hall. Exhibitors and traders prepare for the show.



Lorrie takes over operating duties at St. Cloud, as I take a rest from a batch of repairs. Here you get a good view of the layout presentation. Alongside, the Christmas tree train works faultlessly.

On to Trainfest, according to the publicity materials, the biggest train show in the USA. Over 30 layouts in varying scales and gauges. The show is run by Model Railroader magazine in conjunction with the people behind the World's Greatest Hobby shows.

We spent much time between the shows making sure that the layout worked without problems. I re-laid track, soldered wires, and finished scenic work. So, as we packed everything up I was fairly confident that we had solved the problems and things would be OK.

A very amusing thing happened within moments of getting to the show on Saturday morning. The first person we met was Ed Olson, organizer of the Granite City train show, who we'd seen the previous week at his show. Despite our repairs we still had more than a few problems with the layout. Things seemed all right after we set up on Friday afternoon. But things must have settled overnight, and the baseboard join was stepped. Stock derailed nearly all the time, and it took quite a lot of work to get everything running to my satisfaction. But I got there in the end, and the afternoon running session was a delight.

I was amazed at the amount of **Dispatch** readers who came up and introduced themselves. Thank you so very much. You make it all worth while.

There was some interesting micro layout content to the show. The Märklin stand had a small Z gauge layout in an attaché case, and one modeller (who I couldn't find to talk to) had a small and very pleasant looking N gauge scene in a picture frame.



Märklin briefcase layout



This N scale micro layout presented in a picture frame gathered a few interested viewers. It's a very nicely observed detail to have the walls of the tunnel stretch all the way back so that you can't see into the "offstage" area. As you can see from this picture on the left, power came from a simple Bachmann train set controller.



This T-Track corner module scene caught my eye. All four seasons on a layout just 28" square, technically just over micro size. The presentation was nice. What you can't see in a photograph is that the layout was mounted on a turntable and rotated slowly. It was just so nice to look at. Sometimes that's all you need.

The highlight of the weekend for me, was meeting John Suppon and seeing his Tamarack Creek Logging and Lumber Railroad. I had seen John at a few shows in the region over the years and he always told me that my APA Box layout that he saw at the Worlds Greatest Hobby show five years ago, inspired him to build his layout. His modules are really nicely presented, and sturdily built, with an excellent level of finish. I'll let the pictures of a few of the modules speak for themselves. I hope that John will provide an article on his concept, which he calls "65 Mode" in a future issue of The Dispatch.

There were many highs over the show weekend and apart from the layout problems that we sorted out on the Saturday morning no lows to speak of. Our layout was located in front of one of the concession stands. When the line for food and drinks got over a certain length we felt like we were in the way, and if the two exhibitors planned to be

A couple of miscreants at Trainfest. John Suppon and yours truly.

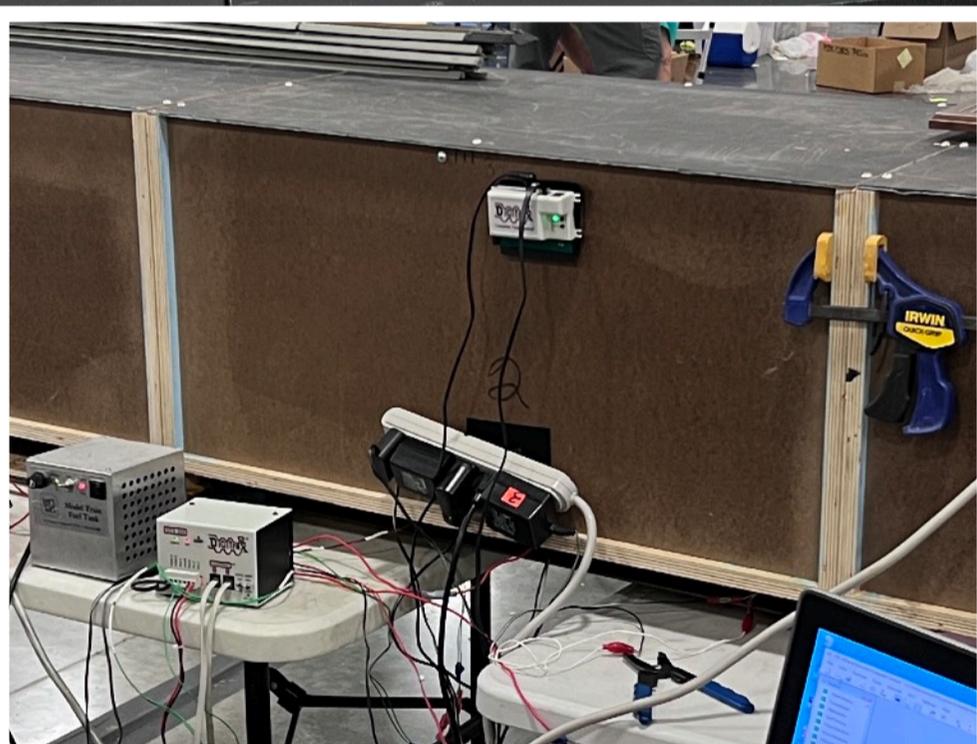
alongside us had attended, it would have been quite the cramped situation there. It was a little unnerving to have people with greasy food and drinks so close to our trains, wanting to take a close "behind the scenes" look at things.





John had 10 modules on show as a part of his display. These are just a couple of them. All are capable of being worked singly or joined together in multiples in any order, just like your typical modular system like Free-Mo or T-Trak. If you look at the

exit hole for the tracks in the side of the module, you'll see that the plywood used is about one inch thick. This makes for a very sturdy box, much more so than an APA Box.



A night time scene was possible by having some blue lights in the roof of the cabinets, it made for an interesting effect. The inset picture shows that back of a module. I hope John doesn't mind this behind the scenes view. But you can see thanks to the sturdy

construction of the module. It's possible to hang things off them, with no detriment to the module case itself. The modules were NOT held together with woodworking clamps if you were wondering,



People young and old were fascinated by my 'Neath the Christmas Tree layout. An older gentleman stopped me to say how it reminded him of the train that his grandfather had under the Christmas tree when he was a child.

Many people wondered how it was powered, thinking that there was a magnet underneath the track.

One person who was an electrical engineer, pulled a micrometer out of his pocket and proceeded to measure everything with the intent of making his own track.

Some people had a problem grasping the concept that this was a dolls house scale model, thinking that because the trains were tiny they must be a tiny scale. Not realising that it is basically a model of a model train. Perhaps next year I should add a Barbie doll to the scene? At the other end of the hall was a Lionel Standard Gauge layout, so people could compare my model with the real thing. It really does give me great pleasure to see people of all ages enjoying this so much. As the years go on, I intend to add more details to the scene. Of course, I can only summon up the holiday spirit to work on it for a few months of the year. It's hard to work on a Christmas model in the summer.



All in all, Trainfest was a very enjoyable experience. Once we had solved the running problems at the start of day one, that is. As an exhibitor there wasn't much time to go around and see everything.

We were a two person crew operating the layout, and our chances of viewing other layouts and traders took place when we each took a potty break. It was a long walk to the restrooms at the far end of the hall. But we made sure we took in as many of the other stands in as possible on the walk there and back.

So perhaps next year, if a Dispatch reader or two in the Milwaukee area would be interested in being guest operators to give my wife and I a better chance to take a look around, drop me a line. I really do mean this.

I was delighted to run into an old friend, Bob Davidovich, who scratch builds the most incredible

models of the worlds largest construction cranes in N scale. The models are a joy to see, and his styrene work was a definite influence on me attempting to build tiny locomotives for my Christmas tree layout. Of course, the main purpose of being there was to promote micro layouts and **The Dispatch**. I engaged in discussions about the joys of smaller layouts with many. I had a particularly long chat with a member of the Athearn sales staff who popped by on a break from his stand.

To my surprise the British trains were very well received and I spent both days operating in British Rail mode, rather than switching to American trains as I was expecting to do.

People are most definitely receptive to the idea of micro layouts and I would encourage any micro layout builders to get out there and publicise the hobby. Trainfest was certainly worth it



This is about as good a picture of the layout as I will ever take, I think. If I straighten up the legs of the loading structures it might be perfect.

You do have to be careful on a micro layout. Restricted siding lengths mean that here I accidentally parked the brake van in the engine shed.



Park Hall Halt.

Bob Hughes

OO scale. Size: 28" x 10" 710mm x 250mm



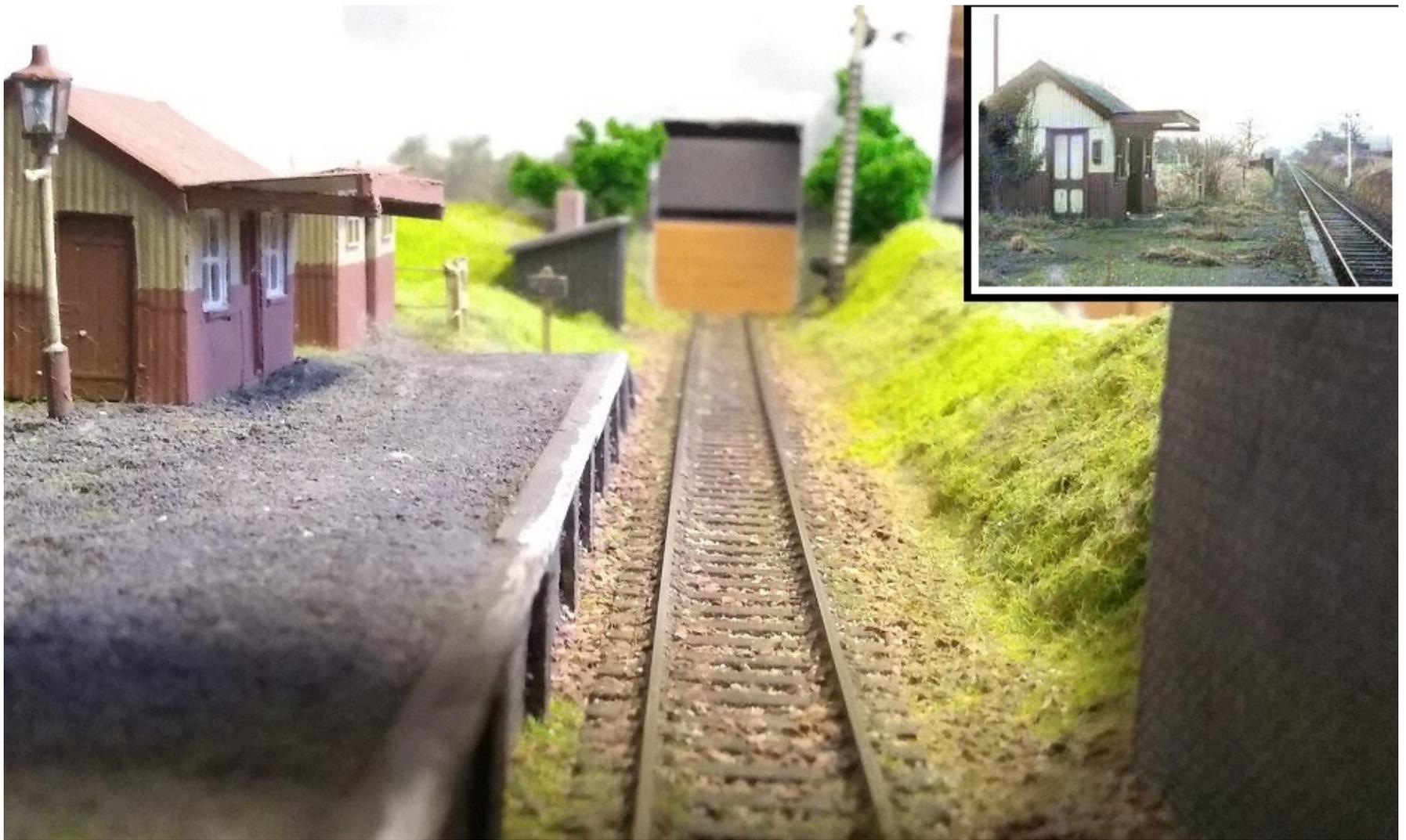
That's all there is to it. Park Hall Halt. A real location in a Micro.

I was both surprised and flattered when the editor asked if I could provide an article about Park Hall Halt for the Micro Model Railroad Dispatch. It's not a new layout and I have moved on from OO scale modelling since I built it. Park Hall Halt was the ideal prototype to model because not only is it a very small station but it is also bisected by a bridge

over the platform, which acts perfectly as the exit-to-fiddle at the Gobowen end. Choosing your subject is an important aspect of building micro layouts. The Cambrian Railway has hopes for reopening the line to Gobowen. Perhaps I'll be able to exhibit the layout again, at its actual location. Only time will tell.



The running in board is one of the remnants of the halt's original platform, which the GWR rebuilt during the Second World War to improve facilities.



The insets in these two photographs show the real station, looking towards Oswestry (above) and towards Gobowen (below). It shows just how realistic a micro layout can be.





The exit at the Oswestry end is disguised by a shallow cutting and some bushes with the Gobowen distant signal acting as an additional distraction to break the line of sight. Some selective compression was required here but a cutting does actually exist between the remnants of the halt and the level crossing over the Oswestry bypass road.



A lonely passenger waits for the next train.



Park Hall Halt was last exhibited, appropriately, at Oswestry station in 2013. While I was in the area I took the opportunity to photograph the model and the real thing together. The corrugated iron station buildings were long gone but the track and the platform are still there.



**CARTEL
CONVERSATIONS**
THE MICRO MODEL RAILROAD PODCAST

***The ONLY
Podcast Dedicated
to the
Micro Model Railroad
Hobby!***

microcartel.blogspot.com

Hosts:

**Tom Conboy
&
Ian Holmes**

Monthly discussions, interviews, modeling tips,
and recommendations.

Don't forget the Cartel Conversations Podcast is there for your monthly fix of Micro Layout talk. Presented by Tom Conboy and Ian Holmes.

THE CHRISTMAS DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway designer, builder and enthusiast



*All ready for
Christmas*



THE CHRISTMAS DISPATCH

For the Micro Model Railway layout designer, builder and enthusiast

It's a lot of fun, to be sitting here on a gorgeous Fall/Autumn day thinking about Christmas. My wife and I were talking just the other day about getting ready to bake the Christmas cake, (baked to a family recipe that might be as much as 80 years old).

Thoughts of Christmas time spurred me into action on my Christmas project. Since the success of my 'Neath the Christmas Tree layout last year, I have been trying to come up with a way to make a more realistic train than the Teeny Trains "train" (I use the word loosely) that came with the sets. To see such a tiny train circumnavigate the tree is quite the sight, people utterly loved it at shows.

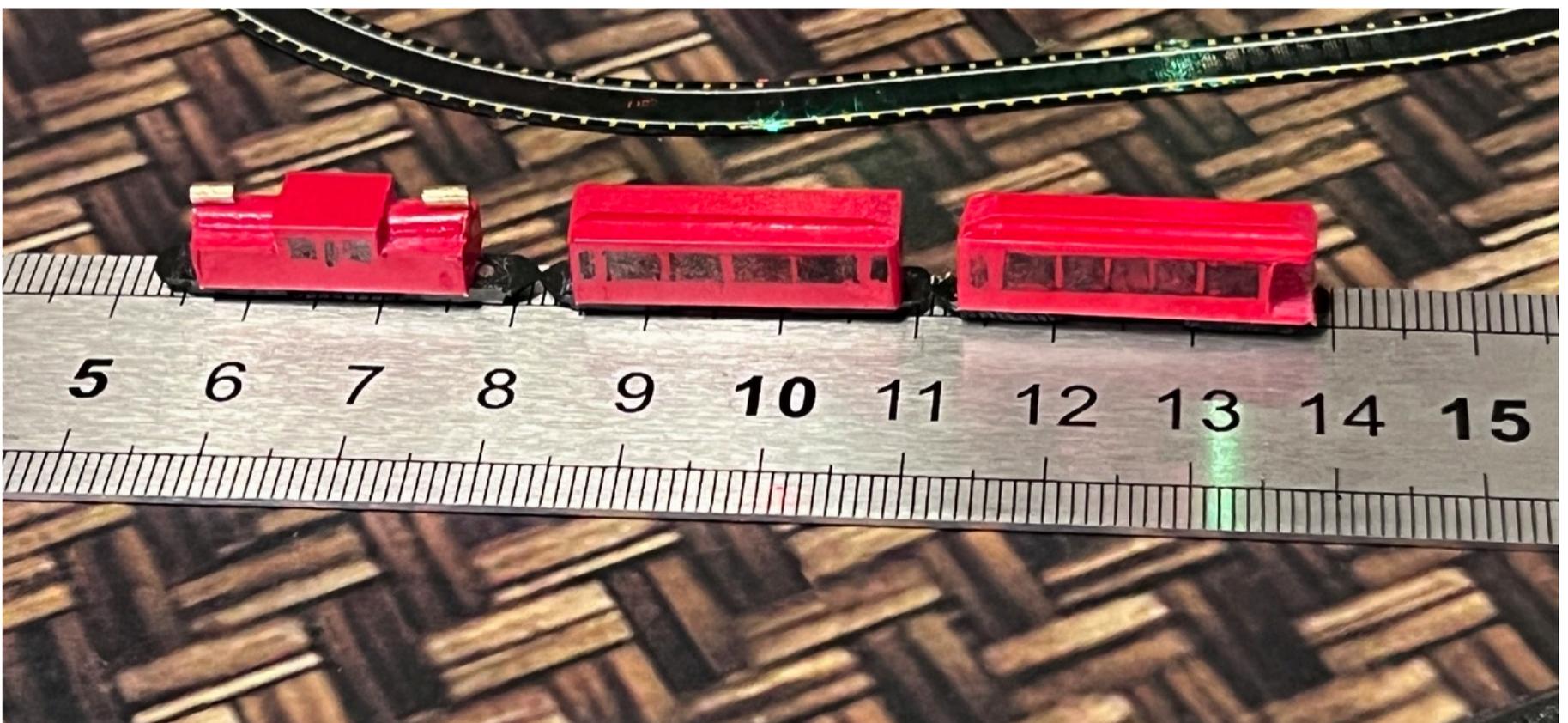
But the problem was it was just too tiny. You could barely see it. The black "steam locomotive" was next to invisible, and the coloured coaches were indistinct. I needed something more like a train. My first thoughts were towards making a model of a Polar Express train, as few things say Christmas more than the Polar Express. As I looked more at the layout, and how dated the wallpaper was. I decided

something older than The Polar Express would be suitable, and given my fascination with Lionel Standard Gauge Trains, I thought it would be fun to try to recreate one of these. Knowing that these early designs were very boxy in appearance and should be easy to model was a consideration too.

With the advent of 3D printing it would be very easy to make something and print it off. Me? I don't have the money for a 3D printer or the space for that matter. So I had to resort to the old fashioned method of scratch building. I had many different sizes of styrene section to choose from. It was really just a case of finding the right sizes to stick together and file away to create the right effect. As you can see below, in these cruel enlargements, (each car in the train is less than 1" or 25.4mm long) they look the part. It really does add another dimension to my little layout.

I hope you all have a great Holiday season with lots of Micro Layout and model railway fun.

Ian



A cruel close up of my attempt at a Lionel Standard Gauge train in Dolls House scale. When it's moving around under the tree the deficiencies are not noticeable. What's planned for Next Year? A Polar Express perhaps?

Snowvale.

Al Barten.

Scale TT3, 1:100 9mm track gauge 12" x 17" 305mm x 425mm

After 75 years of playing with and modeling trains, I've finally built a winter scene. Snowvale, a fictitious town in a mountainous northern hemisphere setting, incorporates HOe/009 trains on 9mm track with scenery at a smaller 1:100 scale (British version of TT). By my calculation this would be a scale 36" gauge track (actually 35", but who's counting?).

The layout is built on the lid of an A3 box (about 12"x17") that can be neatly stored away with the box bottom placed inverted on top. I had originally intended to model winter on one side of the scenery divider and summer on the other. Along the way I decided to model only the winter side and use the back side pocket to store tall scenery items, specifically the town Christmas tree and other tall firs. The 3+" box height can be a limiting factor with scenery, especially since I raised the ground level to accommodate a small stream. But don't be surprised if I eventually do build a summer scene on the other side – perhaps an N scale trolley. Because this is really a display layout to be shown for about a month once a year, I kept things simple. No turnouts and a Rokuhan power pack that runs on 4 AAA batteries. I did get a little fancy with lights in the shop and a flickering fire in an oil drum for the Christmas tree merchant. What's a winter scene without lights?

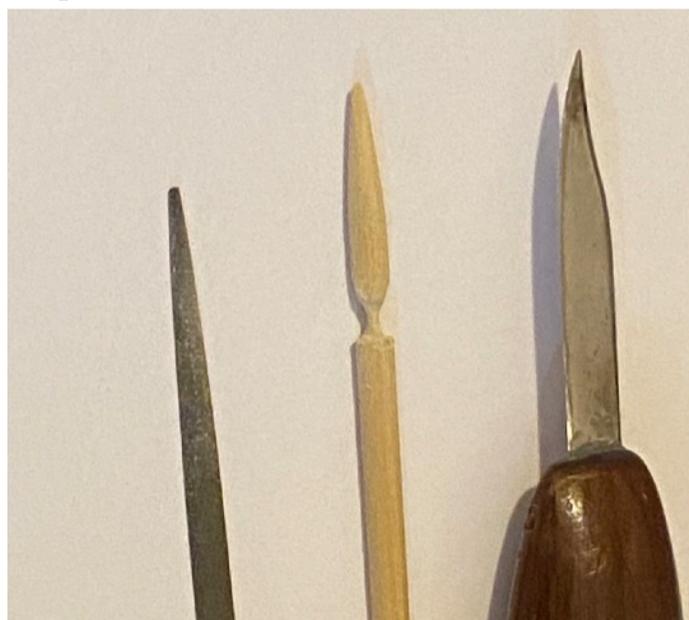
In general I tried to avoid a rectilinear grid in laying out the track and scenery. I also thought in terms of scenery vignettes to make things interesting. I couldn't find the many people characters that I would have liked. Maybe I'll have to start making my own, or modifying the commercial ones. All track is Kato N gauge Unitrack with 117mm radius curves. I added a slight zig-zag for interest. The tight radius curves led to my using standard N gauge couplers (aka Rapidos) rather than the common 009 Bemo couplings. The latter didn't handle the curves and the former just barely do. (I have a set of 009 rolling stock for each coupling.)

Rolling stock includes a Narrow Minded Railworks 3D printed tank loco fitted to a Kato 11-109 drive and various kitbashed wagons. The coach was made by cutting down a Budget Model Railways coach to fit on a Peco 9' 009 chassis. The open car with trees was made by building a styrene shell over a Graham Farish N gauge open car, and the trailing coach is a Dundas Festiniog quarryman's

coach kit. I attempted to show elves (red painted figures) in the tiny windows. Toys are carried in the open wagon with tarp (my first attempt at making a tarp). If the train were longer I would add an open car with coal for the bad boys and girls. I've forgotten the history of the NOG car.

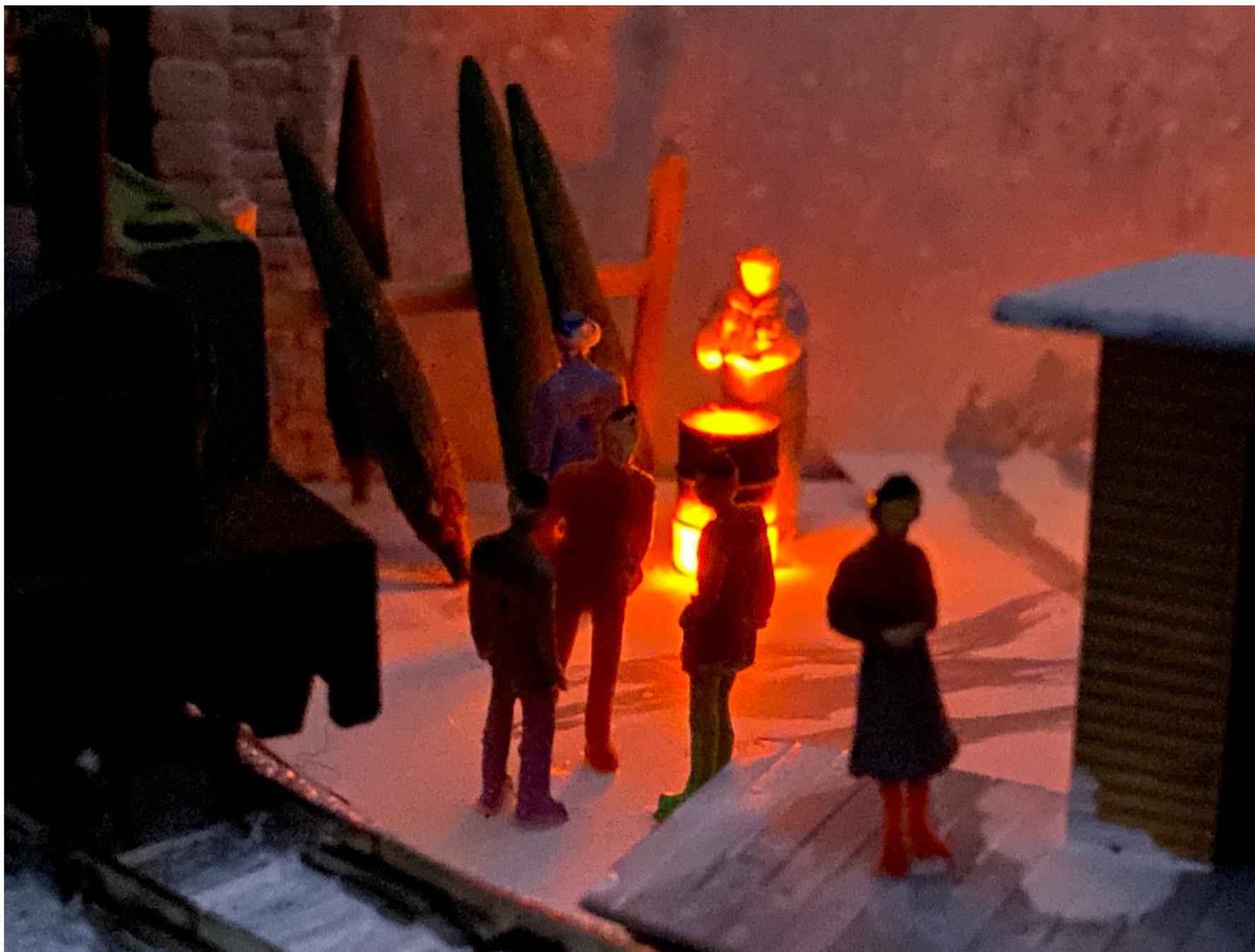
The station shelter and the one store were scratch built from styrene, and the shop has an additional brick paper covering. The bundled trees in the open car and at the tree stand were made by whittling down a section of wood dowel, filed smooth and painted. The oil drum with flickering light and man warming his hands are made by Mini Prints. The background is from a photo I found on the Internet. I don't have the ability to print larger than normal stationery, so I printed it twice, once in reverse, and overlapped them on the foam board divider.

I originally planned to make three-dimensional snow using baking soda, but after hearing it can lose its shape after a year or so, I decided to simply paint things with white acrylic (Cotton Ball by Americana). I'm happy with the results. This has been a fun project, even though its focus is so pointed.



How Al made the trees for his Christmas tree seller vignette. Trim and shape a piece of dowel with a knife and a file, then a coat of green paint.

Editor says: Al has put up a YouTube video for you to watch to get you in the Christmas spirit.
<https://youtu.be/tUnVbMJzdNk>



The Christmas Tree seller warms his hands on the brazier



A snowstorm descends on Snowvale, a clever trick photo editing trick.



With the snowstorm passed through, the children of Snowvale visit Santa



Overall view of this fun, seasonal Micro

Christmas Memories.

You share your stories of Christmas and model railways

The greatest Christmas gift I ever received came from my father in or around 1970. He was notorious for doing all the family Christmas shopping at the last moment and on this occasion he tried to find a train set for me at FAO Schwartz in New York on Christmas Eve. They were completely sold out, so he had to "settle" for the window display, a factory built N gauge layout by NOCH which used Rapido track and trains.

Well, I loved that train set more than anything in the world. I played with it endlessly, watching the train travel up the grade and through the tunnel, across the bridge and then back under past the brook and lake before circling back around past the station. I tried to imagine what it would be like to scale myself down enough to live in the little homes and cottages that dotted the landscape. I can see it all clearly to this day.

Thus was born my fondness for micro or small scale railroading. The picture must have been taken the year after I received it because the year I got it,

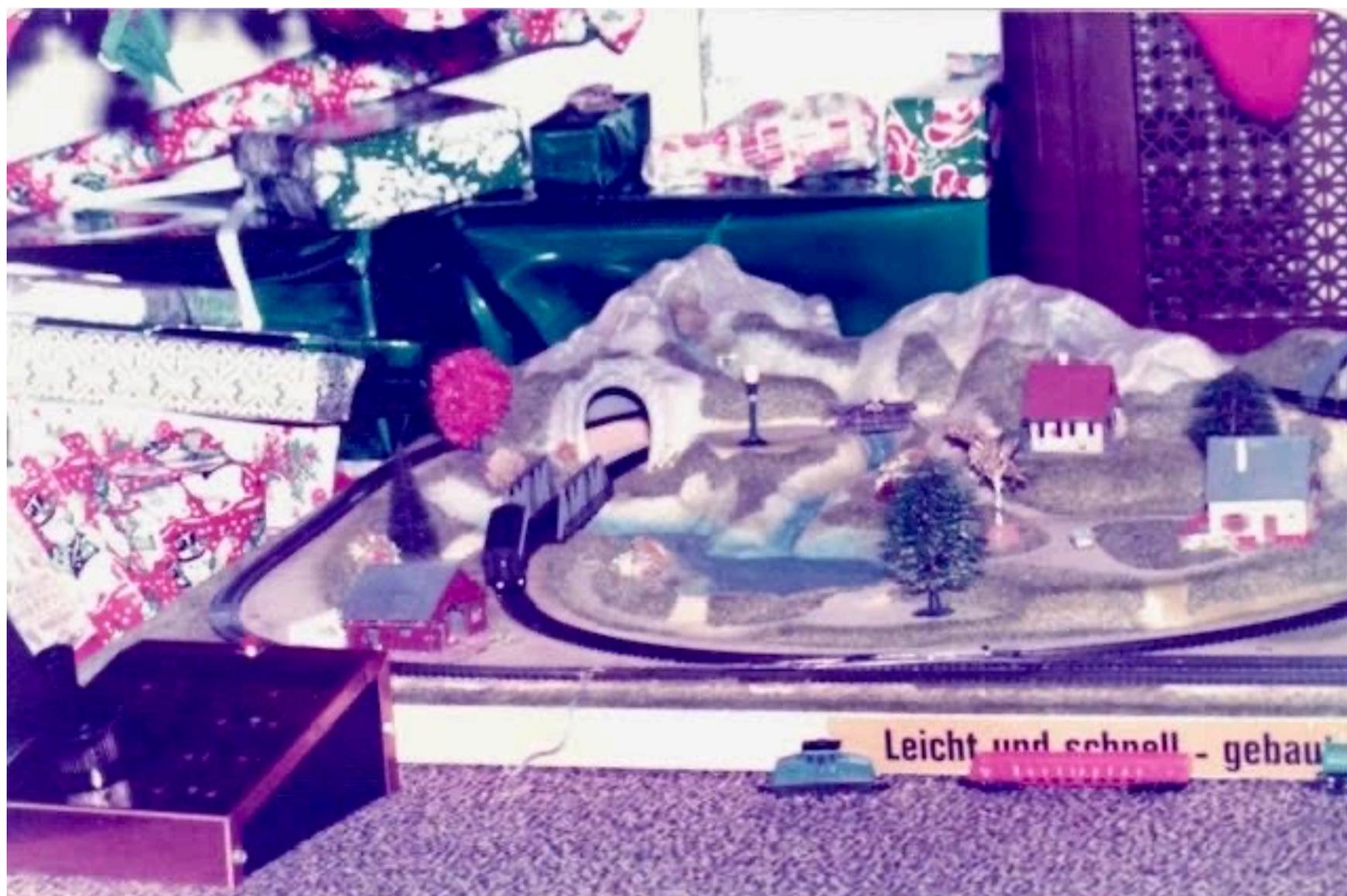
my father had set it up on the dining room table where it remained for several months.

Do I remember that transformer, it had a "pulse" switch that would move the engine along at a crawl. I always liked running engines slow as it seemed more realistic and allowed me to study the cars as they went by. In subsequent years the layout was placed under the tree as part of the decoration. I also see some trees in the photo which I added and were not part of the original set.

Later in life, I came to regret the added scenery and holes I had drilled in the board for street lamps, telegraph poles, etc. I also recall trying to add remote control switches only to find the Atlas track did not match up to the Rapido. Being a kid I didn't know any better and was just trying to have fun with it.

Today, had it been left in its original state and in the original box it probably would be worth a pretty penny.

Gerry Christensen





Another view of Gerry's Noch Christmas layout

Once you received that first train set, Christmases after that weren't that difficult to be bought for. Even if you didn't get much in the way of train stuff for Christmas one year, you'd always get money from a distant relative somewhere or a family friend. With that you could go to the toyshop in town and buy something.

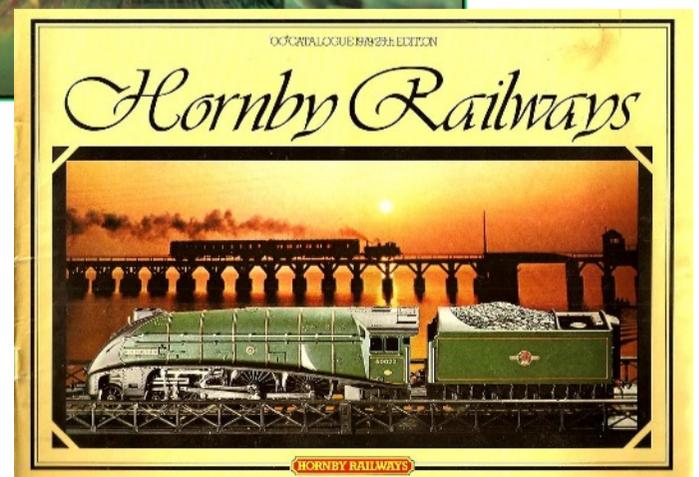
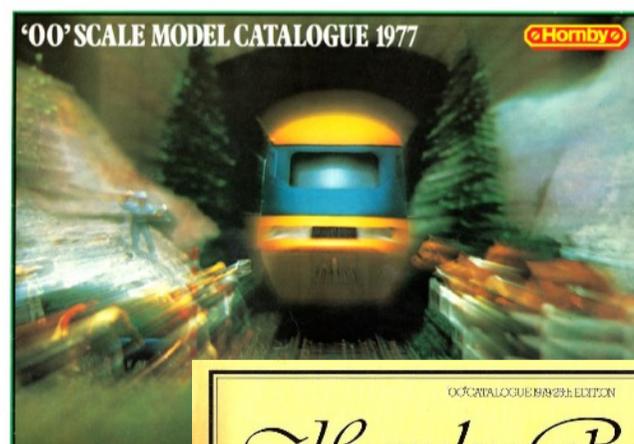
Back then you could go to the toyshop in town to get something. Hornby model trains weren't just found exclusively in hobby shops. I could find things in the model section of the barber's shop in town. There was a department store in Louth, not far away, that carried a small stock of things too. Nowadays I think the nearest model railway shop to Mablethorpe is 40 miles away in Lincoln.

Perhaps you'd buy a signal or a length of platform. Perhaps if everyone in the family had been really generous you might be able to afford a coach or something more.

The Hornby catalogue for the year always seemed to come out after Christmas, perhaps early in the new year. You'd invariably spend 50p on the latest

catalogue for you to drool over until your birthday. When you could get something else cool for your hobby.

Ian. H



Boxing Day.

Colin Peake

(Or how to store your Christmas micro for the rest of the year.)

The alternative title for this piece was “The Other Eleven Months”

As having spent the time to restore and rebuild Christmas Tree Halt; (as seen in **The Dispatch** issue 3), I determined to find a way of safely storing it for the greater part of the year that it would not be on display.

I was mindful of the fact that the damage to the original version may have occurred due to it being badly stored without any protection. Given that the trees are removable the easiest option would have been to locate a suitable proprietary storage box such as a Really Useful Box (other brands are available). My requirement was rather than box the layout with the trees in place, and in the process a lot of fresh air, the box needed to be as low in height as possible and give equal protection to the base of the scene and the removable trees. Having looked at the commercial options I concluded it needed an 11 litre Really Useful Box, and they were not available locally. It would also have involved a cost, and when you have a selection of materials to hand building your own makes some sense. I have created storage boxes for layouts before from hardboard sheeting and timber framework and something similar wouldn't be too difficult to produce. Keeping my low height in mind, rather than use timber and hardboard for the sides I opted to use some offcuts of 8mm ply as it would make little difference in weight at that size. I had acquired this material in the form of an old box that originally held vintage car parts, in the days when things were packaged properly! The ply was cut into strips a shade under 70mm wide to create the sides.

More recycled material followed, the hardboard for the base and lid came from the back of a modern wardrobe and the 5mm ply used for dividing within the main box is lovely veneered material that came from a vintage wardrobe disposed of many years ago. Only the 25x12mm timber used to surrounding the edge of the lid was new, but in stock from a batch of material purchased specifically for layout-boxing. The

overall size of the base of the box is approx 400 x 320mm with the lid wider by 25mm in each direction.

The base of the box has two main compartments, the pizza layout fits neatly in the large compartment, secured with foam strip around the edges. The two trees fit in the smaller compartment, retained by a system of trunk peg holes drilled into timber off-cuts and special supports in the centre. A full-height diagonal compartment in the corner holds the battery pack and batteries and a lower diagonal compartment holds the present wagon, as a dedicated item of rolling stock it lives with the layout. The lid is firmly bolted into position for storage. With the lid clamped in place, holes were carefully drilled through to the bottom part of the box, then carefully opened out from the inside edge to hold the nuts. The nuts were Araldited (*Araldite is a two part epoxy adhesive commonly available in the UK*) in place and the thin aero-ply plates, with holes punched using an office hole punch rather than drilled, were fixed in place as a belt-and-braces approach to stop the nuts falling through in the unlikely event the Araldite failed.

With the lid in place and secured, the box provides adequate protection for the layout. I just have to remember that unlike the covers for my other layouts that bolt to the baseboard itself, this one cannot be stood on end as the board is not fully secured in place. All timber surfaces and hardboard edges were sanded smooth and received a coat or two of yacht varnish to protect them from moisture, which really lifted the appearance of the once-rough plywood sides. With a couple of Silica gel sachets placed in the box to control moisture, ‘Christmas Tree Halt’ can now safely sit in storage until the time for its annual appearance on display.



The empty box with dividers and padding for protection

Everything fits in perfectly



The layout is now fully protected



Ready for another Christmas

A Train Set For Christmas.

Danny Figg

1:12 (dolls' house) scale. Size: 16.5" x 16.5" 420mm x 420mm



On display, the seasonal feel is enhanced having the layout exterior covered in wrapping paper. What a great Christmas present!

A Train Set For Christmas was one of a series of micro layouts I built several years ago, as entries to the annual Dave Brewer Challenge that took place at ExpoNG in Swanley. In 2012, the brief for this was simply to create a continuous run 'pizza layout', fitting within a circle of maximum diameter 60cm. I was keen to take part, having enjoyed participating in the previous year's Challenge, but wanted to do something a bit unusual. I was also wondering what to do about the continuous run, which, although an inevitable feature of pizza layouts, can look a bit odd in such a small space unless some sort of scenic break is added. However, the introduction of T gauge (3mm gauge, 1:450 scale) by Eishindo a few years before had given me an interesting idea, and the competition seemed to be the ideal opportunity to try it out. With such a small gauge now available ready to run, I could set the track and trains in a scene of a much larger scale, creating a model of a model railway. Using 1:12 scale would be perfect – the T gauge track would work out at a scale 36mm, very close to scale 0 gauge, and the popularity

of 1:12 as a dolls' house scale meant that plenty of household furniture was available to help me create the overall scene. And what could be a more realistic use of a continuous oval of track, than a model of a continuous run model railway?

I found that others had had a similar idea already. Carl Arendt's *Small Layouts Scrapbook* website had once featured a scenic Z gauge layout built by Fred Stephenson into the attic of a 1:12 scale doll's house, representing a Gauge 3 layout, and on the Gnatterbox forum was Simon Dawson's layout, representing a kind of home office, with computer, desk and model railway on an adjacent shelf, using the same combination of T gauge equipment and 1:12 scale scenery and figures that I planned to use. I had always planned to do a 'train set on floor' type of scene but needed a bit more to make the overall layout interesting. I decided to have the track encircling a Christmas tree, creating a festive and nostalgic scene and with the tree and other Christmas items adding interest.

The baseboard is fairly conventional, with Sundeala on a wooden frame, the difference being that on this layout it also has MDF sides and a roof, forming the shell of the 1:12 scale living and dining room. The roof can be unscrewed to access the layout from above when necessary. The board is square, with sides of about 42cm, giving the longest diagonal that would fit within the specified 60cm diameter circle. One of the nice things about a very large scale such as 1:12 is that it is easier to use real materials, in very similar ways to how

they would be used on the real thing. For example, the floor and skirting boards are constructed from stripwood, with the floor then being varnished. While it might have been more authentic to have a darker stain for the varnished floor, the lighter colour does help to reflect the light and illuminate the scene. The ceiling and walls are likewise painted with Dulux emulsion match pots.



How many of you ran your train set under the dining room table on Christmas Day until some frustrated parents told you to move it?

The track is laid directly on top of the wooden floorboards. This is 120mm radius, which at the time was the smallest radius available for T gauge; a slightly larger radius would probably have fit but would then have left less space for other items. Originally, I wanted to have a simple circle, as used for old 0 gauge tinplate train sets, but as the proprietary T gauge power connector needs a straight section of track to clip into it is actually a short oval. The dining table, chairs, cabinet and dresser are all items intended for dolls' houses, as are the window frame and the Christmas cake and

crochery. The table and two of the chairs are loose and removable, to allow easier access to the track which passes underneath, for track cleaning and re-railing. The Christmas tree pot is a real terracotta plant pot in the smallest available size, as sold in garden centres for seedlings and small houseplants.

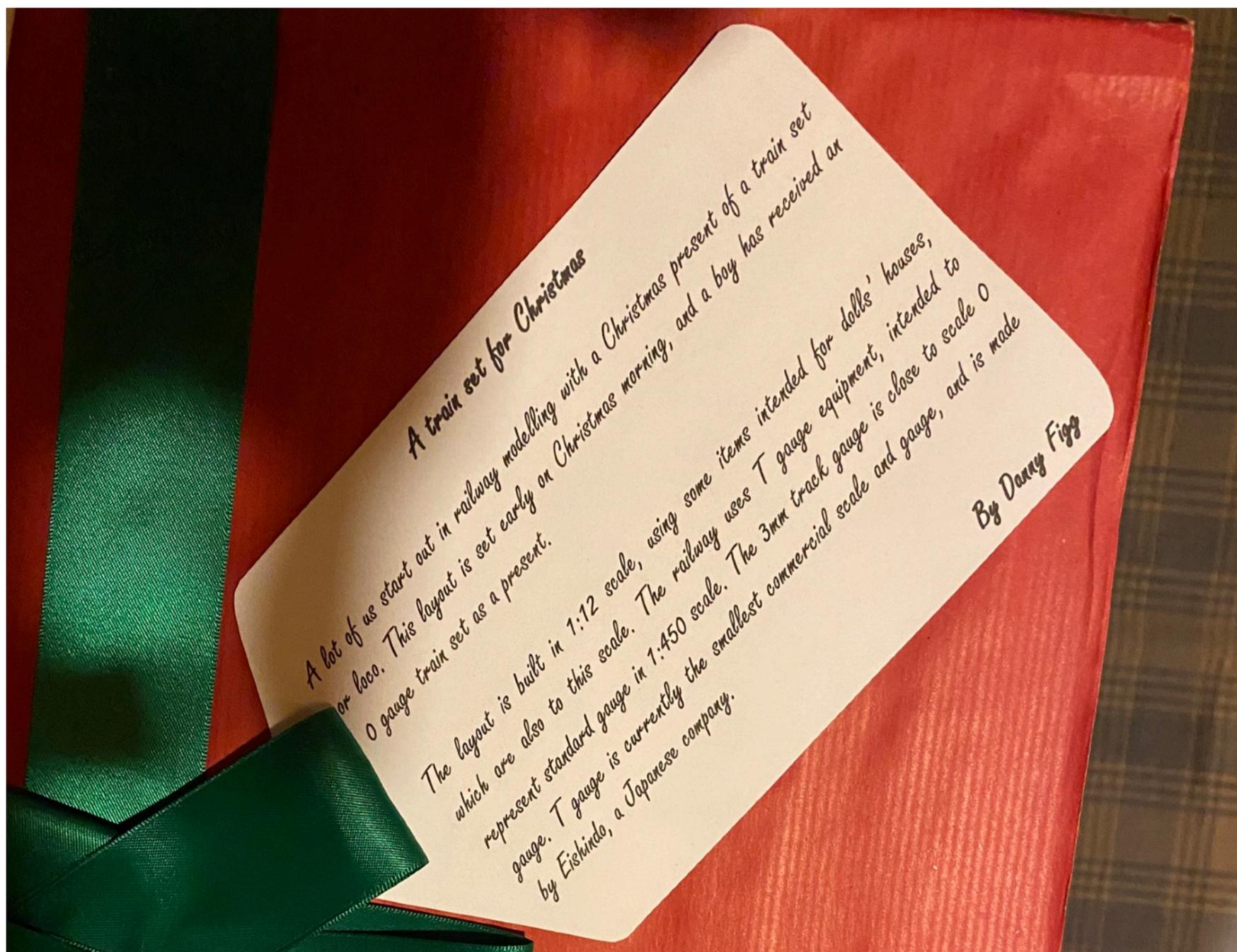
The Christmas tree itself was surprisingly difficult; the obvious solution seemed to be a very tall pine tree, intended for smaller scales but scaling to the right height for a domestic Christmas tree in 1:12 scale. However, the branches did not look quite right and the tree that was eventually used is another dolls' house product, specifically intended to represent a Christmas tree. The compost in the pot is represented by tea leaves, and metallic pipe cleaners are used to represent tinsel.

Lighting again uses dolls' house items, made by The Miniature Lighting Co. As well as the Christmas tree lights and the main overhead light fitting, there is a fireplace at the back of the scene. The area surrounding the fireplace is tiled with miniature glass tiles that are intended for use on coasters and table mats, with some diluted black paint used to weather them to a slightly sooty finish.

The miniature plugs and sockets supplied with the dolls' house lighting accessories seemed a bit overscale, so these are located on the outside of the layout's walls,

with the wires for the Christmas tree lights being routed to it via a hole in the wall, disguised as a plug socket with some bits of styrene section. The wire from the controller to the track also uses this route, as well as having a scratch built non-working model controller within the scene itself. The overhead light and fireplace wires are all on the outside anyway, and similarly plug into the dolls' house lighting socket at the back of the layout.

On the walls, some metal jewellery components are used to represent picture frames, adding interest to the layout. The pictures themselves were found online and then printed at a much-reduced size, as were the miniature Christmas cards in the cabinet. The curtains on the inside of the window, and the snow scatter applied to the outside, provide a further finishing touch.



What a lovely little touch this is! When the layout is on display, this present label gives the details of the layout.

Finally, model Christmas presents to go round the tree were created by wrapping up small pieces of wood and cardboard, as well as a cotton reel, in suitably shiny and festive looking paper, with small ribbons added, together with labels, handwritten carefully with a very sharp pencil. If you look carefully, they do actually say 'Merry Christmas'! The child playing with the train is a dolls' house figure, while the cat (a very nice but slightly overscale Schleich item) watches operations with interest, waiting for the right moment to pounce on the train. Some say this is the most realistic feature of the whole layout. The original stock for the layout consisted of a single KiHa 40 (a type of Japanese railcar), selected as it was the cheapest complete train available ready to run in T gauge. This failed a few years ago while preparing for an exhibition and has been replaced with another one, which runs much more smoothly thanks to the improved motors now available in T

gauge stock. The standard T gauge controller supplies power at 4.5V, either from a transformer or from three AA batteries. Following a suggestion by a visitor to ExpoNG, where the layout made its debut, it now has a Christmas present wrapping cover, which is removable and attached to the outside of the layout with Velcro. The layout continues to be exhibited and is generally well received – it is something a bit different and it makes people smile, and lots of exhibition visitors can relate to the idea of the train set as a Christmas present, or the track laid around the tree and under the table. It even impressed the judges at ExpoNG, who presented me with a junior award in the competition (which at the time I was young enough to be eligible for). In addition, the layout usually comes out each year as part of my Christmas decorations at home.

Merry Christmas everyone!



The warmth of a fire, and a child playing with his new train set. This is what Christmas morning is.

Fiddle Yard

A few months ago, the model railway world in England was abuzz following the announcement from PECO of the introduction of TT:120 scale track. Your editor was one of them.

Then at the start of November, British model railway manufacturer Hornby upped the ante with the announcement of a complete range. Train sets, locomotives both steam and diesel, coaches, wagons and track. Not to mention a whole slew of scenic accoutrements. Everything you'd need to build a layout in TT.

I'm not going to get into the whole Triang Hornby TT3 and the new Hornby TT:120 difference.

That's not important to this rambling.

Basically, this is the introduction of a whole new model railway scale. Something that only a major manufacturer like Hornby could do.

They have announced a plan of releases for the next five years. This will give the scale time to get established and build up a fan base.

Simon Kohler, the marketing and development director at Hornby, has been working on the introduction of TT:120 since 2018 so this does not appear to be spur of the moment thing. Simon had noticed, just as I have at many shows here in the USA, that many people say they'd love to have a model railway but don't have the room. Two years of Covid and families sharing hobbies led to the development of the thought of families building model railways together. This is an old idea, something that advertising stressed right from the early days of the hobby. Though it was more a father and son thing than the entire family, that Hornby are promoting today.

Of course, limited space is something that we micro layout enthusiasts have been working with for years. To have one of the chief executives of England's major hobby manufacturers state in publicly in interviews time and time again, that TT would be the perfect scale for those starved for space. Made me think about TT again.

My brush with TT came with the original TT3 the 1980's when a friend who had a good collection of TT gave me some of his duplicate items. Of course by then TT3 was already in the dustbin of history but I was immediately captivated with it. The size of the items just seemed perfect to me. Sadly life got in the way and I never got the chance to develop my ideas and plans.

The editor shares his thoughts

What could micro layout builders do with this new TT:120? Small layout designs that were previously larger than four square feet could now be shrunk down to the four square foot limit. Something like a Roy C Links' seminal 00 scale plan "The Art of Compromise" (Railway Modeller October 1978) for example could now probably fit within the micro layout confines.

Similarly plans that are already micro sized could be smaller still. The scenic section of Rodney Hall's P4 masterpiece Llanastr (MRJ. No.2) was already only 4 feet long. If you shrunk it to 75% of its size then it's no more three feet long.

Mr Kohler mentioned window shelves as a good layout location. Here you now have two fine layout examples that could fit on the smallest window ledge. Then there's Cyril Freezer's classic "Miniories" design too. A busy urban terminus layout that would be perfect for the larger windows in your house.

So many great things are possible. I'm very excited about it all. As are a lot of small "cottage industries". Buildings and other scenics accessories are already being made and advertised with big full colour adverts in the model railway press in the UK. Even 3D printed loco bodies are starting to appear. People are really fired up for this new scale. One sobering thought for me is that it's very early days yet and the items that are available are the prestige things that will shift big numbers. Mallard, Flying Scotsman etc: If like me, you're after a workaday Brush Type 2, Class 31 diesel for some freight working you'll have to wait. But it's there on the release schedule, and I'll be ready to part with my money just as soon as it becomes available in British Rail Green.