

# The Micro Model Railway *Dispatch* For the Micro Layout enthusiast

Issue 21. Spring 2026



## *5 years of The Dispatch!*



# The Micro Model Railway *Dispatch* For the Micro Layout enthusiast

**H**as it really been five years? What started as an April Fools joke is now five years old. I really do have to pinch myself. It's been a great experience to put together this journal sharing peoples micro layout projects. May it continue for many more years. Thanks to you all for your support.

We will have a "proper celebration" of the milestone next issue, (we're at 60 pages for this issue) and if any of you would like to share your memories of those early issues. I'd love to hear them. In the meantime enjoy the cover images of a few favorite layouts of mine from the last five years.

**Alfred Barten 1939-2025.** It saddens me to report the passing of Al Barten. Al was a great supporter of The Dispatch. There are quite a few layouts of his, as well as some track planning and location ideas contained in the back issues (issues 5,6,7,8,10,11,15, and 19, he was quite the prolific contributor). His approach was centered on "enjoyment". He was not interested in scale fidelity. He just derived joy from running model trains. If the track on a layout of his was 9mm gauge he was just as happy running N gauge trains as he was 009.

Al was an enthusiastic rail fan and was a co-founder of the Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum in Massachusetts in the early 1990's. He was a frequent contributor to railroad and rail modeling magazines, other than The Dispatch, of course. These included Railfan & Railroad and Railroad Model Craftsman.

The last communication I received from him was concerning the shortage of articles for the winter issue of The Dispatch. He apologized that he wouldn't be able to provide something because he was in hospice. He must have passed shortly after I received that email. I would have liked to have sent him one last email to thank him for his contributions.

I shall miss his cheerful emails and attitude.

***"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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# Falcon Rock

Robert Telford

Scale 009: Size. 25" x 14" 635mm x 355mm

**T**he idea was simple enough. Even I couldn't go wrong. Instead of laying set track to allow test running whenever I hosted an 009 Society group meeting. I would produce a permanent oval to occupy the centre of the table, one which would be scenically attractive when viewed from all sides.

Use of a tape measure showed that a 42" by 22" base, from 2" by 1" timber topped with plywood, would accommodate a 9" radius oval without overwhelming the available space.

For too long, a completed and somewhat anglicised Kibri H0 kit of Falkenstein Castle in Austria had rested on a shelf in my modelling room, and its time had finally come.

Placing it on the completed board suggested an island, and my imagination, which until that moment had regarded the job as a bit of a chore, became fully engaged. I mean, who wouldn't jump at the opportunity to also play with model boats?

Reducing the radius to 6" would allow space for representing water, and it soon became obvious that the island must be moved off-centre on the board to favour one side with more open water. A degree of angst was inevitably involved in deciding which face of Kibri's lovely kit that would be. A reduction in radius would also restrict its use to small engines, a minor consideration when set against what would be gained.

The island begged for a name. Having searched around for something clever, something truly devastatingly interesting, and having ignominiously failed, I settled for a rough translation of Falkenstein as Falcon Rock. Which meant that I had to acquire a falcon! A Busch Crow suffered an undignified operation and was painted to hopefully represent a Peregrine. It watches events unfold from its perch on a castle roof, and inevitably spawned a legend that if falcons ever desert the rock, the castle will fall.

With the arrival of a trio of submarines and a Supermarine Walrus flying boat (*Airfix kit*), the Rock gained a purpose as the administrative HQ of the Iles de Loisir navy. Iles de Loisure, (*the Idle Isles*), as a nod to my 009 Idle Valley Tramway modelling theme.

Where are the islands? Maps are no help, for like Jonathan Swift's and Studio Ghibli's flying island of Laputa, they move whenever I try to pin them down. I first envisaged them as a crown dependency lying off the French coast, in the manner of the Channel Islands. As I've represented calm water, they tentatively migrated to a vast inland European lake set between warring neighbours, a bit like Ruritania on Sea.

At an 009 Society East Midlands Group open day one gentleman kindly commented that Falcon Rock reminded him of a castle on an island that he had seen in the Italian lakes, so perhaps that is where I should concentrate my search.



Falcon Rock from above. Although the "island" sits on a larger than micro sized baseboard. The oval of track is contained in an area only 25" x 14" clearly micro sized.



*Falcon Rock is a truly spectacular place for such a tiny footprint.*



*Submarines and Seaplanes? Clearly Falcon Rock is of some strategic importance.*



*The little steam tram hauls a short passenger train along the sea wall.*



I never quite know what will happen when my friend Andrew Glover pays a visit. The figure of Rapunzel appeared one day while I was making coffee, and a month or so later was followed by her knight in shining armour. It was Andrew shopping online who found the submarine mounted as a wagon load, so I can't claim any credit for its appearance beyond minor repairs and a paint job.

What is truly unnerving is how what started as a small, basic project for a functional use has subtly acquired an identity and a life of its own!

*Rapunzel has let down her golden hair to a valiant knight. Can you also see the falcon for which the island is named?*

# Brayfield Estate Railway

Peter Smith

Scale: 16mm Size: 36" x 42" cutaway triangle 914mm x 1066mm

**O**ver a great many years, I have tried everything from Z scale to 16mm scale, indoors, outdoors, club room, you name it. Most of it since the early days has been narrow gauge, and since we downsized in retirement 10 years ago, has been small or micro layouts. My layout Empire in OO 6.5 was in Dispatch issue 6. Empire was important for me because I removed all the wiring, making it dead rail, and installed radio control in the locos. All my layouts since have used radio control, saving so much layout building time.

During the Covid lockdown in the UK. I started building 16mm scale locos, mostly from kits where battery power radio control is quite normal. I had no plans for a layout, but seeing the efforts of our Editor, I tried a few ideas until I was reminded that Roy Link, an eminent UK model maker and manufacturer had built more than one version of his well known Crowsnest layout in 16mm scale. It is all in his modelling life story told in Crowsnest Chronicles, a lovely book sadly now out of print.

The Crowsnest track plan is essentially a long curving track with Y points diverging outside the curve at each end to meet at a working wagon turntable. A weigh bridge on one

side of the turntable gives the plan a purpose. I realised that allowing for the leeway afforded to the larger scales I could get this plan into a space 3ft wide and 3ft 6 inches long measured on two sides of the triangle. It is more than 4 square feet but hopefully near enough to match the micro test.

I hand built the track as a smooth curve, and short Y points are essential to reliable operation. I was able to make the triangle slightly larger than original Crowsnest plan and accommodate 3 wagons in the headshunt and removable sector plate at the right hand end of the layout. I have since built the sector plate into the scene but that is another story. My wagon turntable is hand operated.

The weigh bridge office was extended as a more substantial building with a siding off the sector plate to store a few wagons and add operational interest. It has a full interior in the weigh bridge office and the adjoined workshop. The head shunt incorporates an unloading point where a skip can be emptied.

I have enough smooth running locos, mostly using delrin chain drive chassis from Bole Lasercraft, a UK garden scale supplier, to make operation fun and I run a train or two every day or so.







*The yard is looking very busy.*



*If I were the owner of the Audi TT, I would think twice about parking it underneath a tipping chute!*



*Peter uses Hornby tension lock couplers on the stock. What are very noticeable items in 00 scale, are almost invisible in 16mm scale.*

*The working wagon turntable is a vital part of the layouts operation, feeding the weighbridge in front of it.*

# DB in a box file

Nigel Matthews

Scale:N 1:160 Size:14" x 9" 355mm x 235mm

I have for a long time enjoyed the compact layout ideas shown on the late Carl Arendt's website and now illustrated in "The Micro Model Railway Dispatch" by Ian Holmes. I like the challenge of minimising a layout to as small a footprint as possible, but maintaining operational interest and for me, some sense of realism too.

My Inglenook type shunting puzzle fits in a standard A4 boxfile measuring 355x235mm and is 70mm deep. Using N gauge Peco code 55 track, one Y turnout and a fiddlestick, a 3+2+2 shunting puzzle is possible. Stock is German epoch V with freight wagons no more than 100mm long and small diesel shunting locomotives.

It was great fun to build, and I enjoyed making the scene look as realistic as possible. The buildings vary, with the rail-served works building being scratch built, and the background industrial building was scratch built from a Scalescenes kit and the low relief building was a printed sheet.

The little layout can operate in non-shunting puzzle mode by adding two extra fiddlesticks. This creates the opportunity to run branch line trains through to other industry. It also means freight wagons can be shunted into the works.



*Very natural arrangement of buildings and scenic details.*



*A very important element of successful boxfile layout design is to have as few buildings as possible parallel and perpendicular to the confining edges of the box. See how nearly everything is at an angle and curves away from the edges. Very effective.*



*A well composed scene, with nothing to give away the fact that this is N gauge.*



*The Portakabin offices form a very effective shield to the offstage exit.*



*These are a couple of remarkably realistic scenes...*



*...yet are contained within this tiny footprint.*



*This is a really atmospheric shot. I can almost feel the rumble of the locomotive as it passes by.*



*It always amazes me the level of detail and atmosphere that modelers can fit into such a small area as a boxfile. No matter what the scale is.*

# Snake Valley Railway Backscenes

Alan Woodford

Scale: Any



*Editor says: The backscenes on Alan's Snake Valley Railway received a great deal of positive comment when the layout was featured in issue 19.*

*Shortly after the Autumn issue of The Dispatch had been released, I was in the UK on holiday. As I was driving through Horncastle in my home county of Lincolnshire, I looked out of my car window and saw this view. I was immediately struck by how much like one of Alan's back scenes it felt. I grabbed this shot on my iPhone while we waited at the traffic lights.*

*I sent Alan this picture and he was inspired enough to want to use the picture as a base for one of his back scenes. He now describes the process.*

**W**hen my article on the Snake Valley Railway appeared in Dispatch 19, I was asked if I would do a follow-up on the backscenes. The methods used might be of interest to those, who like me, are daunted by the prospect of painting full scenes. To overcome this, my solution was to treat the backscenes as collections of flattened models, and rely on modelling techniques that I was already familiar with.

I must admit that these techniques owe more to the 1950s than the 21st century, being based on scrap cardboard and poster paints, but hopefully the notes here are general enough that they could be adapted to modern materials.

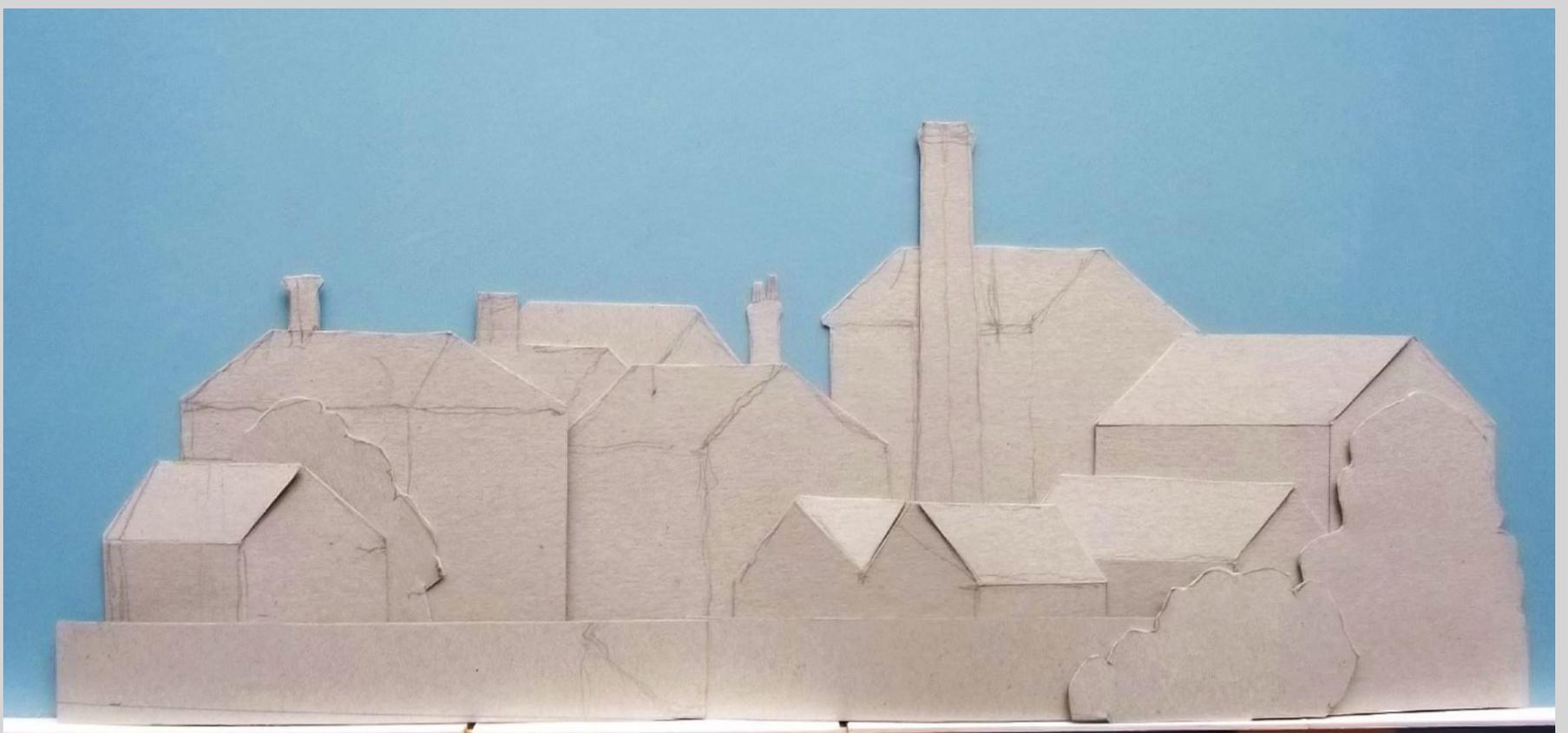
The nice thing about making up a scene as a kind of jigsaw was that it allowed adjustments to be made right up to the very end when everything was finally glued in place. What I look for in reference pictures for these scenes are plenty of overlapping layers. As I'm trying to depict the environs of a railway station, there are usually buildings involved too. I avoid converging lines

of perspective heading into the scene, such as roads or rivers, as being way too tricky.

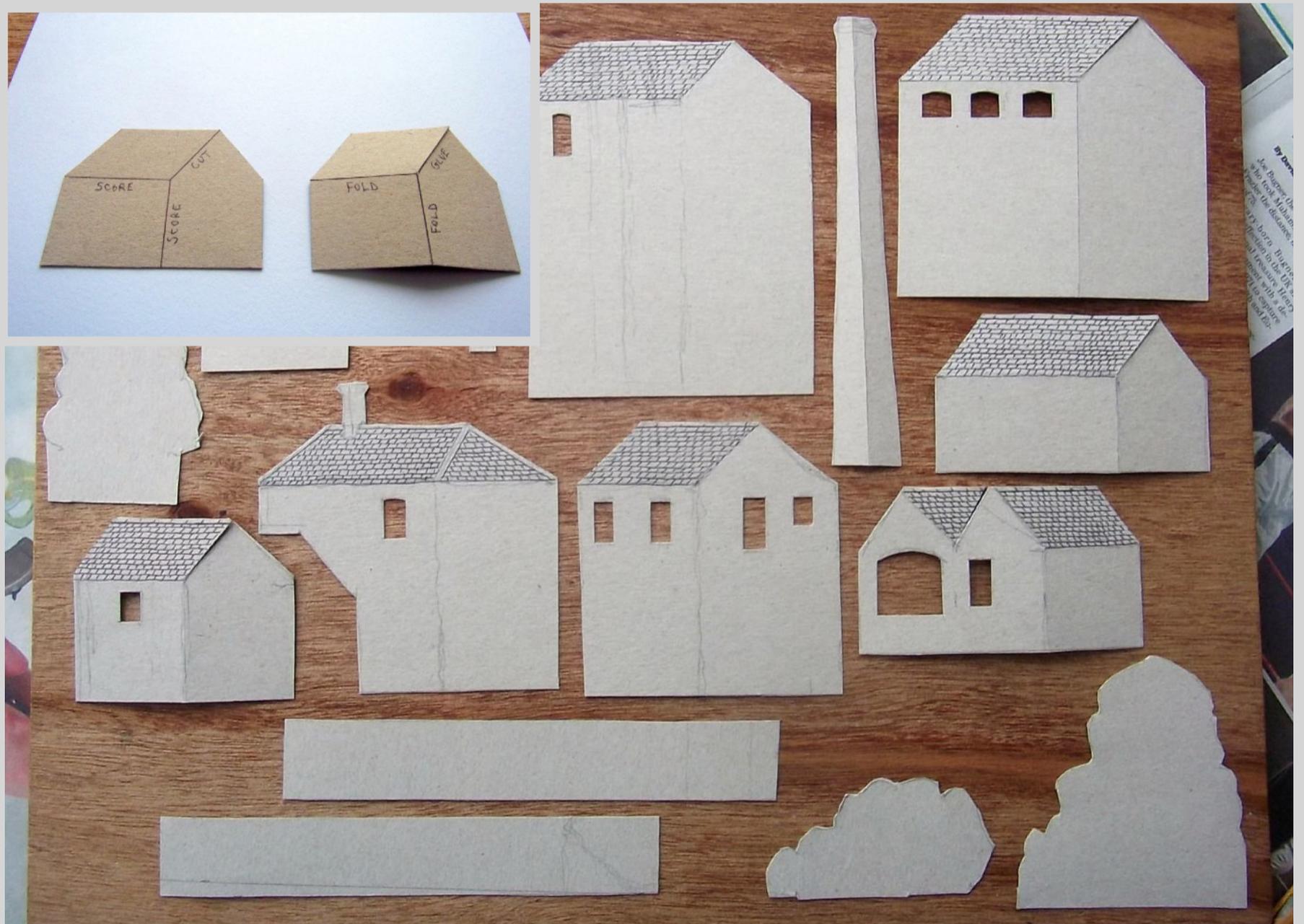
To simplify construction, the individual items incorporate no perspective in themselves, giving a sort of telephoto look, but they may be scaled differently between the layers.

The most useful point here is to hide the base of buildings behind fences, walls, shrubs or other buildings. This removes an important distance cue, so that the viewer is forced to rely on relative size and overlaps to judge how far into the scene a building is located. This simplifies matters no end and allows a lot of leeway when scaling the background objects, as they seem to naturally find their own place within the scene.

I started by painting the sky background on a sheet of foamcore using a couple of coats of emulsion to give a flat light blue. I'm using double sided backscenes on the SVR, but even if I wasn't, I would still paint both sides to reduce warping.



Firstly, a mock-up of the scene was made up from individual cut outs, and has been loosely placed on the sky background. A 10mm deep cardboard ledge glued to the bottom of the sky provides support for the items, as well defining the space available.



This is the collection of individual items used in the mock-up, some flat and some low relief. They have started to be upgraded here, by cutting out the windows and doors, and drawing in the roof tiles. The inset shows how the flats are cut, folded, and glued to give them some 3D appearance.



*Top image: All the elements are decorated and ready to be placed on the backscene, as shown in the image below. It all looks very impressive and convincing.*



*A comparison of my original photograph from Horncastle and Alan's interpretation. You can easily pick out the major elements of the original photograph that were used. The overlapping of all the different building elements is what makes the backscene so striking. Why don't you have a go? You can see how easy it is.*

# Celebrating Precision and Passion

Ryan Vigus

2026 Micro Layout Meet Report



*These pictures show that there was plenty of micro layout fans at the meet.*

**R**anson, West Virginia recently played host to the 2nd annual Micro Layout Meet, drawing model railroading enthusiasts from across the region and as far away as Illinois.

The event was sponsored by the Facebook page “The Micro Madness Group” and “Carroll Creek Design Group”. The event highlighted the remarkable artistry and technical skill involved in creating detailed train layouts on a very small scale, proving that even the tiniest models can make a big impression.

Visitors to the meet were treated to an impressive collection of Narrow Gauge micro-scale layouts, including Z Scale, On18, On30 through Gn15 gauge displays. Despite their compact size, the layouts featured smooth-running locomotives, finely detailed rolling stock, and realistic scenery. Miniature towns, rail yards, bridges, and tunnels were carefully crafted, showcasing the patience and precision

required to work on such a scale. The event also emphasized the strong sense of community within the micro model railroading hobby.

Modelers of all ages gathered to share their passion, with individuals displaying layouts that demonstrated both personal creativity and collaborative effort. The welcoming atmosphere encouraged curiosity and fostered connections among participants and visitors alike.

*Editor says: The meet looks great! I’m going to have to try to make it to one. It’s just one heck of a long way to travel from Minnesota.*

*I hope that the layout builders can be persuaded to share more details of their creations with readers of The Dispatch*



*Micro Layout #1 N Scale Matt Chibbaro.*



*Micro Layout #2 Gn15 Steve Sherrill.*

A key attraction of the Ranson meet was the opportunity for attendees to speak directly with the layout builders. Hobbyists openly shared their techniques for track planning, wiring, scenery construction, and digital control.

Dead Rail ideas flowed in installing batteries and controllers into engines in the On18 and Gn15 range.

These conversations provided valuable learning experiences for newcomers while allowing experienced modelers to exchange ideas and inspiration. A quote from an attendee said “ It was like a family gathering”.



*Micro Layout #3 On18 Andy Root.*



*Micro Layout #4 On30 Jeff Peck.*

In addition to the layout displays, the meet offered demonstrations and opportunities to explore tools, materials, and specialty items related to micro-scale modeling: 3D printing, painting with Pan pastels, laser cutting ties to hand lay track. These features helped promote the growth of the hobby and inspired future projects among attendees.

Overall, the 2<sup>nd</sup>. annual Micro Layout Meet 2026 in Ranson, West Virginia was a resounding success. It celebrated

craftsmanship, innovation, and community, leaving visitors with a deeper appreciation for the art of micro model railroading and anticipation for future events.

The Hosts Ryan Vigus & Steve Sherrill said that the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Micro Meet is in the planning stages and will held in January 2027, details will be added to their Facebook page [www.facebook.com/themicromadnessgroup](http://www.facebook.com/themicromadnessgroup) in the coming months.



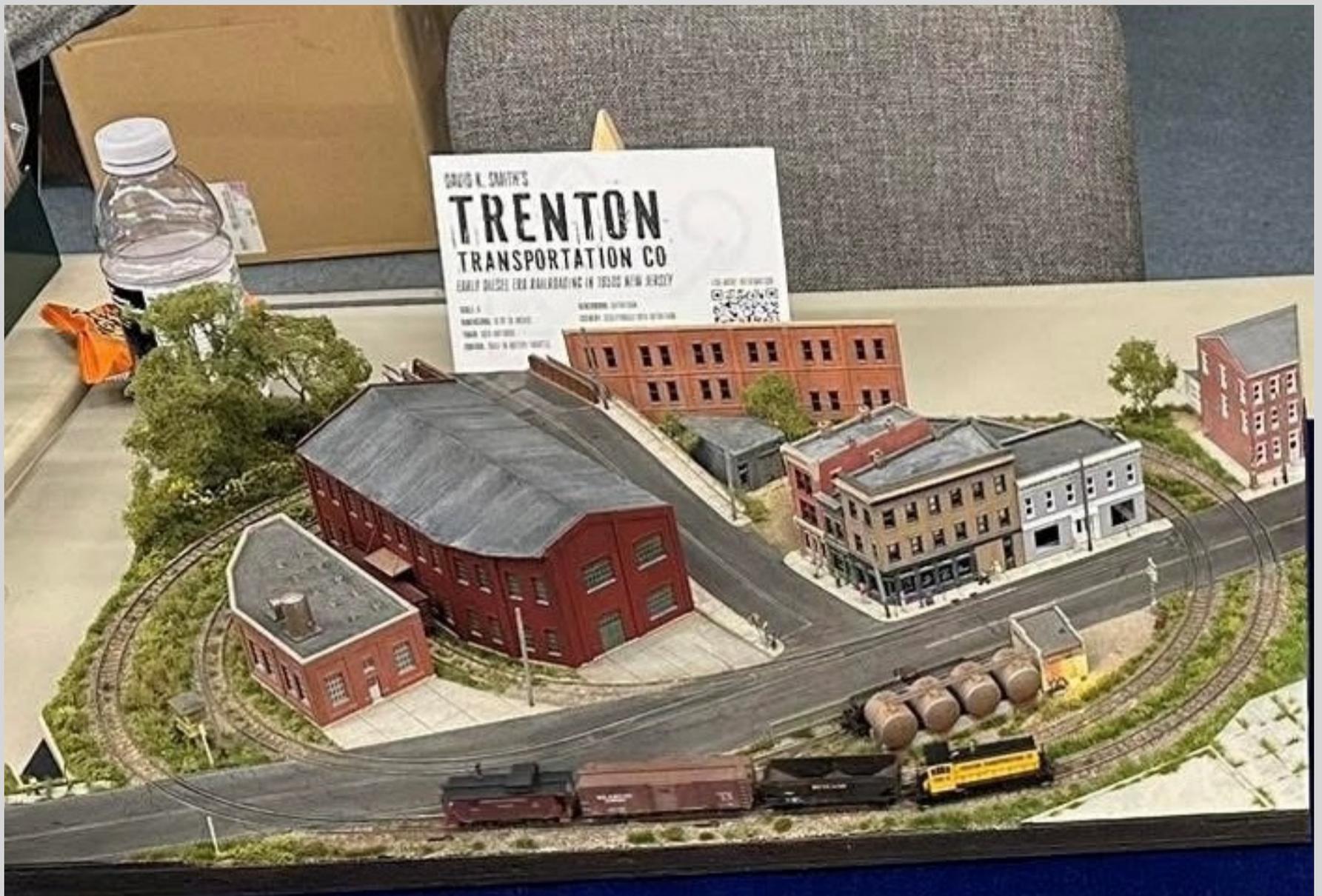
*Micro Layout #5 On18 Greg Cassidy.*



*Micro Layout #6 On18 Art Bloomer.*



Micro layout #7 Dual Gauge On18/On30 Ryan Vigus.



*Trenton Transportation, one of David K Smith's many small, highly detailed layouts.*



*Killashandra Nn3, and Z Scale both by Cody Wayne Fisher.*

*Photo credits from the Micro Meet: Brian Clauto, Cody Fisher and Andy Root.*

# JMB Ore and Timber

Thomas Bowdler

Scale: On30 (1/4":1ft) Size 36" x 12" 915mm x 305mm



Three square feet of On30 delight.

**Y**ears ago I purchased an On30 vertical boiler Shay locomotive from Wiseman Model Services. It is an exquisitely well detailed model and was to be the centerpiece of my future layout in that scale and gauge.

Following retirement and a move to Florida I lacked the room to build a layout with the large curves needed for that locomotive. Last March Ian Holmes announced the criteria for the Cartel Christmas Challenge which would finally allow me to use the Shay.

Out came paper and pencil and I began planning a tuning fork in On30 and only three square feet. I wouldn't be content to just shove cars back and forth on two sidings so I chose ore and timber as the commodities to be carried and unloaded on the layout. I also have a habit of naming things for people in my life and used JMB, my wonderful wife's initials, as the company name.

Sketches revealed that a 48" x 9" space would allow the activity I wished to include. A sheet of insulation foam was cut into layers that size and I began building. I wanted to

include some elevation change to challenge the locomotive and help to separate the scenes so each leg of the tuning fork is on its own level with the lead track in the middle. The rear tuning fork siding rises past the water tank to the dump pit where ore is deposited before being carried upward by conveyor to the processing building. The front branch descends to the log dump where a Jill Poke forces the logs off the flat cars into the unmodeled off scene saw mill. Farther down that track is the coal stage where the locos are fueled, an ash pit where the fire is dumped and then the engine house for overnight parking and maintenance.

Dividing so small a space into scenes was a challenge. The trains enter through a rock tunnel and cut, then pass the boarding house for employees up on a rocky bluff. A crane is used to lift supplies from rail level to the house deck. Boarders have a winding foot path down the hill to get to work.

Opposite the path is the deck where finished lumber from the off-scene sawmill is loaded on flat cars to send to customers.



The lower track jill poke is activated from the operator's position by a dowel linkage which places it at an angle to push the logs off of the flat cars or is retracted toward the stone wall to allow the locomotive to pass to the engine house.



*Drawing the eye into the center scene is the barn red water tank modeled after something that could have been seen in the northeast US. Tanks there were often enclosed and had a stove for heat to keep the water temperature above freezing in the winter. The pump house extension sits over the weir of a dammed stream, the overflow of which passes under the track in a culvert pipe. Stone walls separate the different levels as the trains shove cars to be unloaded on each spur.*



*On the upper track the ore cars are dumped by a carefully shaped piece of stiff wire that tips out the loads of painted aquarium gravel. As the train reverses another piece of wire uprights them for their trip back to be reloaded. The uprighting wire can be seen, but the tipping wire is very well hidden.*

This layout has more structures than I have ever used. I was fortunate to purchase a number of old Lionel buildings cheaply from a fellow club member. Collectors would likely complain but I proceeded to saw them into pieces before reconstructing them into what I needed. The boarding house, ore processing building, lumber deck and coal stage frame along with the engine house roof with skylights came from those old plastic buildings.

The water tank was formed from extruded foam and covered in stir sticks and strip wood. The ore pit building and conveyor were built in the same manner. The sawmill deck and engine house frame were made from wood I milled myself.

Most of the figures were 3D printed by Les Davis and some details came from Wiseman model services. Scenic materials are primarily from Woodland Scenics held in place with dilute Mod Podge as was the track ballast made from chicken grit. The rock outcroppings were hand carved with methods I learned from Dave Meek and colored with acrylic paints. The stone walls were cast from plaster in molds, assembled and painted. I painted, weathered and detailed the beautiful Wiseman Model Products Shay. The rolling stock was 3D printed by Carroll Creek Design Group. I built the V skip buckets and tipping framework from brass on top of their 12' R-T-R flat cars and weathered their 18' R-T-R flat cars to carry the logs.

PWM (*pulse width modulation*) controllers have become my go to method for powering micro layouts with

batteries. These controllers have both on/off/throttle and direction control switches built in. This one was my most complex wiring job since I wanted to be able to power each leg of the tuning fork independently using a DPDT switch allowing a locomotive to be parked on one while another operates on the adjacent leg. The turnout is an Atlas code 83 wye. The layout is simple DC operation.

I enjoyed this build and it definitely was a challenge getting all I wanted to fit into only three square feet. In my head is an idea that I could build another layout of the same size to model log loading and a mine to show where the materials unloaded at JMB Ore and Timber originate. The 24" cassette that fits on the right side to allow placing and removing rolling stock could transfer consists between the two.

Thanks to our son Greg who made the photos and video for my Challenge entry. I encourage you to watch his video showing the layout's operation. It can be found by searching for my name, Tom Bowdler, on the Micro Railway Cartel Facebook page and viewing my entry post from 11-30-2025.

I want to thank Ian Holmes and Tom Conboy for their work on the Cartel FB page and for encouraging us to keep the legacy of Carl Arendt alive. I'll be interested to see what they have in mind for next year's Challenge.



*The ore processing building at rear is a cut up Lionel model. While the engine shelter is scratch built.*



*Another bit of unseen action is the pivoting sewer/water pipe (your choice) from the boarding house which is linked to the turnout throw. Rotating the pipe determines which route the train takes. (See the close up at the right.)*



# Sally's Layout

Ken Jones

Scale:N:(2mm:1ft) Size 15" 400mm diameter

**M**y wife Sally is not someone who builds and runs model railways although she does have 2 N gauge tram layouts, the more modern one she takes to the annual exhibition in Blackpool.

At the last model railway exhibition at the Ally Pally, (Alexandra Palace. An exhibition hall and concert venue in London for our non-UK readers) she bought this circular Pizza N gauge layout because she liked the snow scene. Unfortunately she had not realised that the snow was just powder, so when she put it in a carrier bag to bring it home most of the snow just fell off.

As a result, we have now made a permanent snow scene using white Polyfilla and white acrylic paint containing extra titanium dioxide.

The fences have been repaired. People and animals added, including passengers, snowmen, children, sheep, cows and a snow plough which was adapted for us by our friend Piers Milne, we even stuck the industrial gritting salt in its trailer so even that is now fixed in place.

We have also made the platform slightly less wide so that trains can now clear the platform edge. We don't know who originally built this layout or when. It has an external diameter of 15 inches and we commissioned Jeff Cox of Apex Plastics to make a clear cover and white base board.

The layout made an appearance at the social afternoon celebrating 30 years of the west Midlands N Gauge Club in Nov 2025.



An overall view of this delightful completed layout.



*The top image shows the state of the layout when returned from the show. All the snow had fallen off. The second image shows the work of re-applying the results of another snowstorm.*



*The snowplough (top image) is a vital part of the overall detailing of the snow scene. It all looks great!*



*A couple of trains test out the rebuilt platform.*



# Soggy Bottom Hollow

Tom Conboy

Scale: On30. 24" 610mm diameter baseboard. 10.5 inch 265mm radius

I completed this On30 pizza layout back in December of 2024.

The layout was originally started in 2023 for the Micro Railway Cartel Christmas Challenge, but getting it finished for the contest was scrapped due to a change in plans. I decided to take my time instead of rushing to meet the contest deadline. This meant I could add additional details that would not have been possible otherwise. This decision has turned out to be the better option. It was quite an enjoyable experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed the entire process. Overall, I am quite pleased with the end result.

This project started out by creating a circular baseboard from a 5mm foamcore board. I then used green cellular florist foam to create an elevated roadbed. The roadbed was made from foamcore board as well. The track was hand-laid using Code 83 rail from Micro Engineering and Atlas. The railroad ties/sleepers were an On30 scale wood product I purchased off of eBay.

I then added other materials to give the baseboard a realistic look, including railroad equipment, buildings, grasses, trees, and a painted backdrop. The depot is

scratchbuilt and the three buildings down in the hollow are O scale kits from Make It With Calvin on Etsy. Scenery materials are from Woodland Scenics, Scenic Express, and JTT Scenery Products. The backdrop was created with oil paints on a Canson Art Board



An overall view of Soggy Bottom Hollow. Tom has excelled himself with this layout.



*A series of under construction photos showing how the green florists foam was transformed into the rocky outcrop, and the plain backdrop waiting for one of Tom's masterpiece paintings.*



*Is that pretty lady waiting to meet her beau off the train?*

*Editor says:*

*You may think that Tom has incorporated smaller scale models in the distance to force the perspective of the model in the image above. But you'd be wrong.*

*Buildings were smaller back then. A lot smaller. These are accurately scale modeled structures of the period.*

*I remember visiting a Pioneer museum in Annandale, Minnesota and was very shocked at just how small some buildings could be back then.*





*A masterful view.*



*Wait a minute! Is that a still hiding behind that building?*

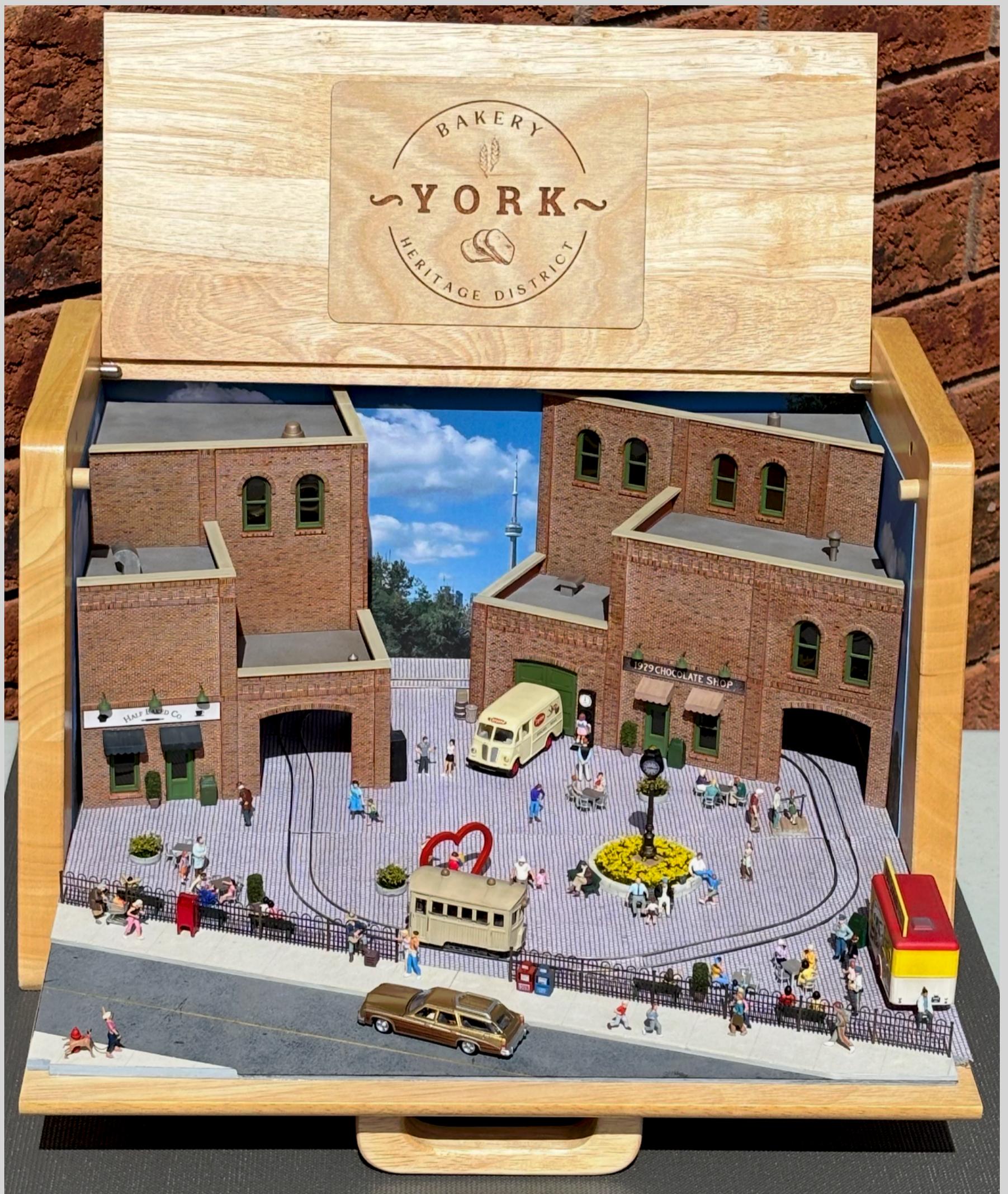


*So many lovely details in this view It doesn't matter that there isn't a train to be seen.*

# York Bakery

Ken Hutnik

Scale:N (2mm:1ft) Size 31" x 12" 780mm x 305mm



An overall view of Ken's very creative York Bakery micro layout.

**I**t was during the Covid pandemic that I rediscovered micros. In past modelling research I had made some notes on interesting micro layouts that I had come across. I was intrigued by the prospect of creating a micro inside an everyday object. I was also taken in by the whimsical nature of some very well-done work found online.

Being homebound like many, I decided to dedicate some time to exploring micros. My first endeavour was Queens Quay, adapted from a plan on Carl's Arendt's site that was called Rayner's Quay. Over the months that passed, I got inspired to create a second micro that would be much smaller, using HO narrow gauge (HOn30/HO 9mm.) Why have just one project going when you can have many?!

At that time, I had no skills or materials that I could leverage for a smaller micro specifically. I did not have 9mm gauge track to use. I could not bend track. I did not have any appropriate rolling stock. However, understanding that HO9 was popular in Japan from my research, I was able to order some rolling stock and N scale sectional track from Amazon Japan.

With my new rolling stock and track, I was able to put together a mock-up. (see photo below.)

With an old breadbox and inspiration from the Distillery District of Toronto, Canada. The bakery district was born. The story followed the same story line as the Toronto district; an old bakery complex was repurposed into shops and restaurants using the original historic industrial buildings.

York Bakery Heritage District shows a busy weekend morning at the complex. (*York was the original name of Toronto.*) A small narrow-gauge line that was used to move supplies between buildings is now used for public tours with a small rail bus.

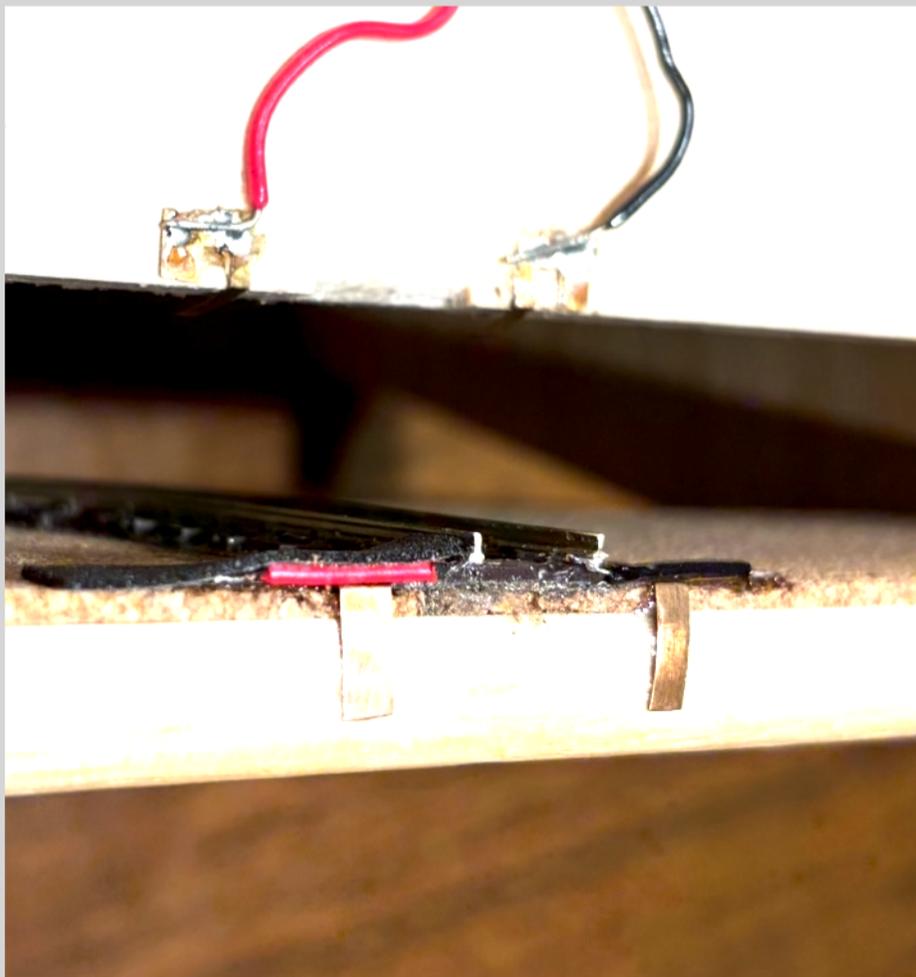
Despite plans at the time, it would be over four years before the project was finalized and completed. It was not until three years later, with some micro building experience now behind me, that I got enthused again and moved forward. Between the initial concept of York Bakery and finishing it, a few other micros were started and completed.



Ken's very first mock up of the layout.



To begin, the bread box was taken apart. This allowed me to get a logo engraved on the door and sides. I designed the logo for free with Canva online. Disassembly also allowed me to do some engineering on the door and the base to host the micro and provide a level surface for the track.



Locomotive wheel wipers from the scrap box were used to create contacts between the door and box then wires were soldered to the track.

The first problem to solve was how to have the door open and close, while having track aligned and powered across the joint. To solve this, the holes where the pins for the door hinged were enlarged to be slots. This allowed the door to be pulled away from the box to open and close avoiding interference with the track pieces. Locomotive wheel wipers from my scrap box were used to create contacts on the door and then wires were eventually soldered to the track and the throttle. York Bakery is powered by a USB power bank and a PWM throttle.

My plan was to have a loop of track that was partially hidden by buildings. Having many DPM building pieces on hand, I mimicked the buildings with photo copies of the pieces. This allowed me to check track path and building clearances.

With the buildings done, I could plan out a street passing by, as well as where a variety of details and scenes would work. The buildings are removable to facilitate track cleaning.

Next was track laying; after drawing the centerline onto the base, the track was held down with DAP adhesive caulking. Cobblestone pavers were printed on paper and cut to fit the area and between the track.

Craft foam was painted and weathered to represent pavement for the road. The sidewalk was cut from mat board, painted and weathered.

York bakery required a lot of details for some specific scenes I envisioned. An example are two newspaper machines that look like actual vintage Toronto machines. I found pictures online, scaled them down, printed, cut and glued them to 3D printed machines.

The Toronto distillery district has a clock, an HO clock by Brawa was used for York Bakery. The flowers are from Temu. The heart sculpture was laser cut by tracing a photo of the actual one in Toronto.

The rail bus is a 3D print on a Tomytec HO9 chassis. The donut trailer is from Oxford Diecast. The figures in York Bakery are from a variety of sources, but mainly Preiser and Woodland Scenics. A photo of Toronto with the iconic CN Tower was used as the backdrop. I took the photo on a past trip to Toronto. The free software GIMP was used for some editing.

After four years of being on and off the workbench, and many hours, York Bakery was completed. Viewers are quite surprised that everything stays in place when the door shuts. Only the three vehicles, railbus and clock get removed for closing. It was a lot of fun doing all of the detailing and building the scenes with figures in the right poses to tell a story.

The railbus does a brisk business taking patrons around the complex. Stop by on a weekend when you are in town!



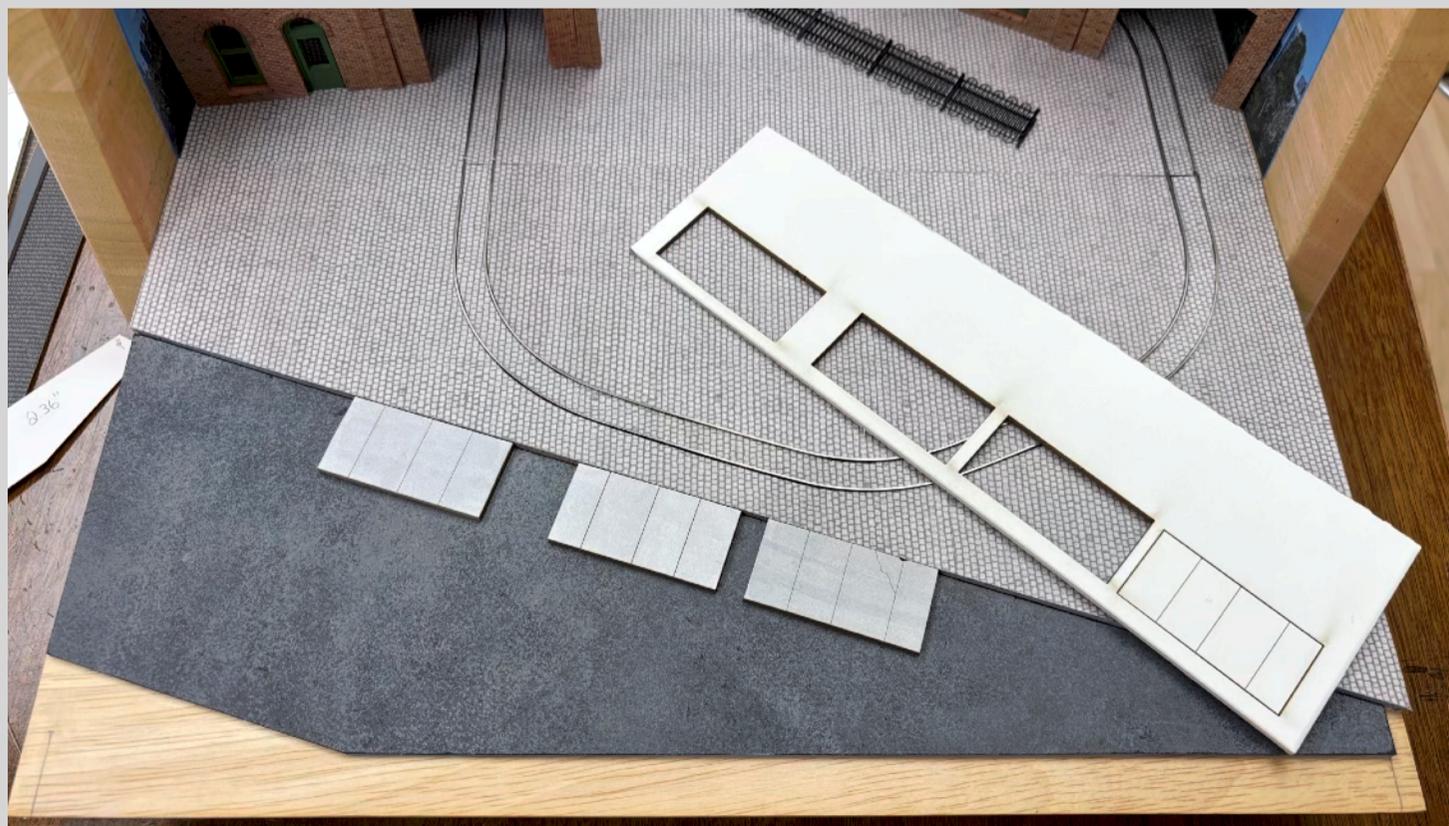
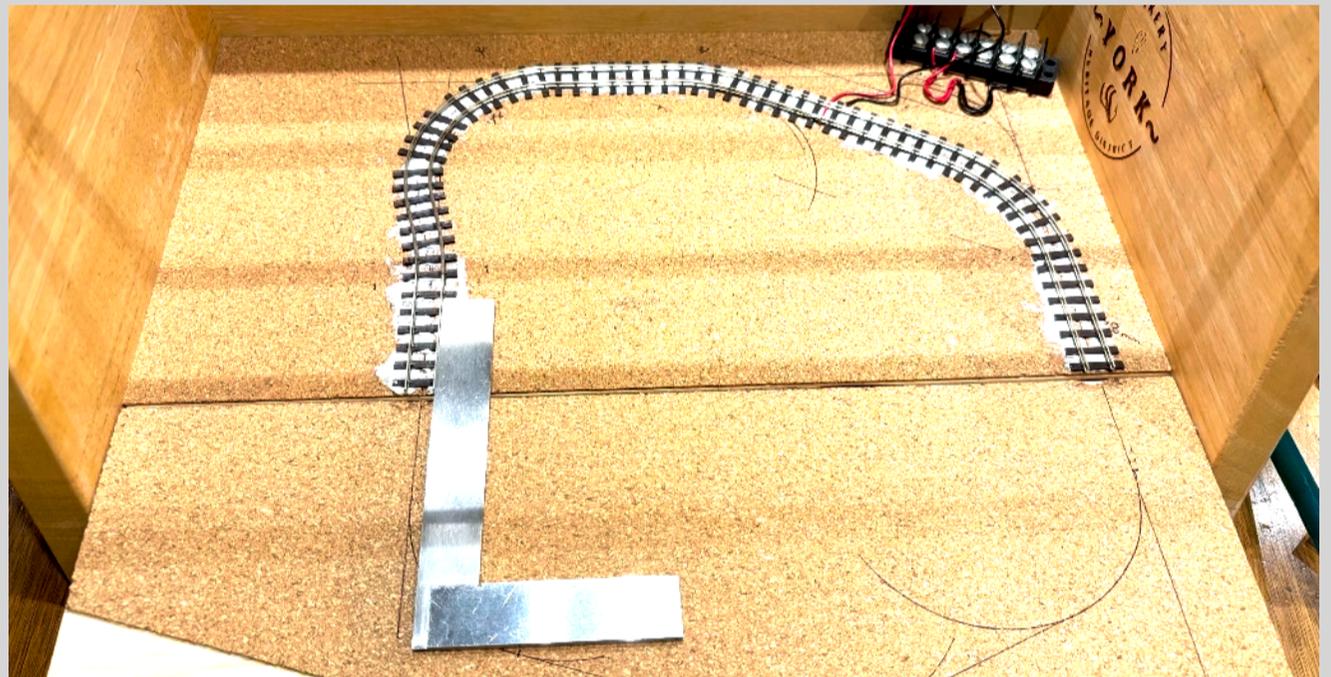
*Ken had a good stock of DPM building parts. So he painted and weathered them and test fitted them inside the box.*

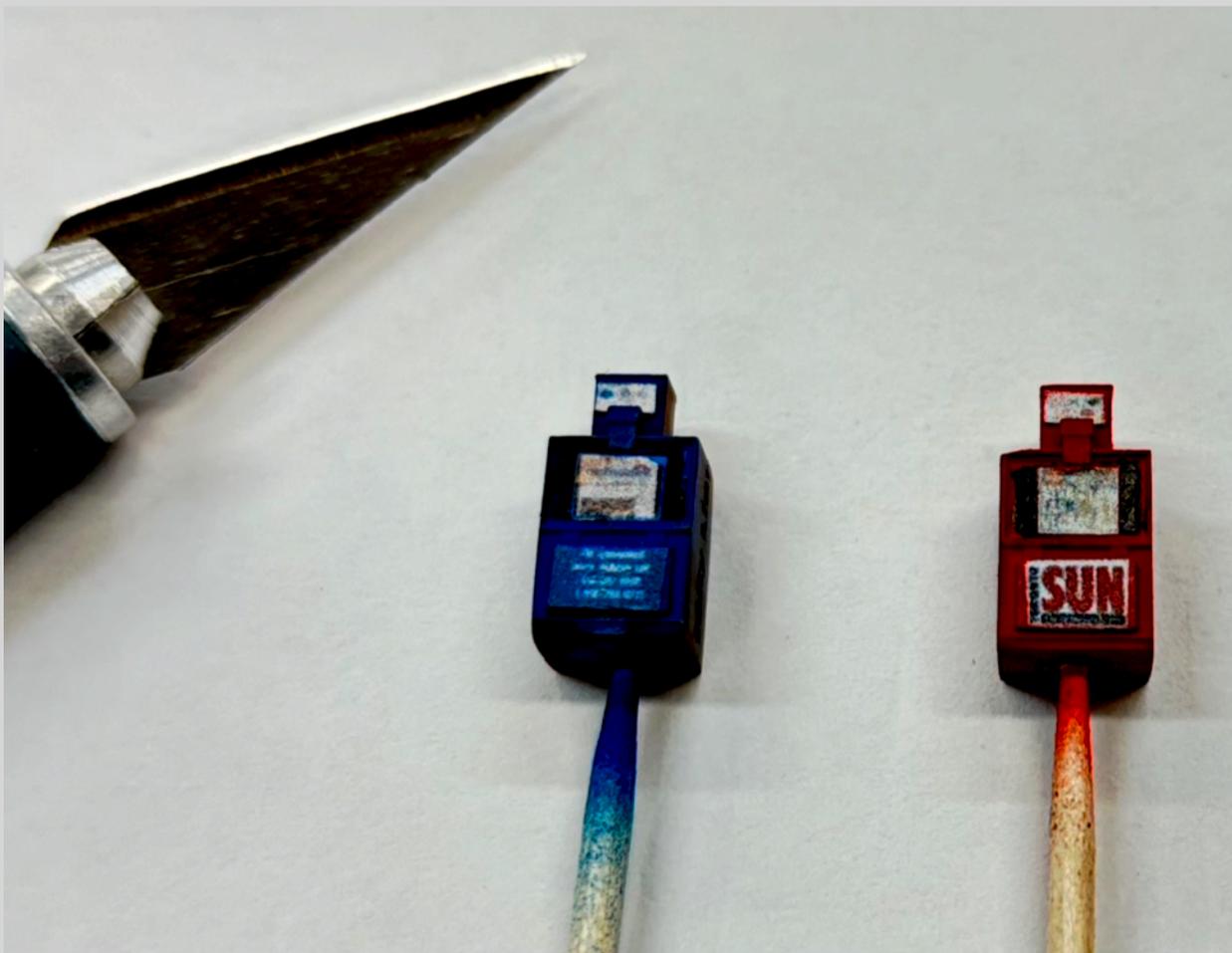


Once the trackplan and structure positions were finalized, work could begin on the layout.

The track was fixed in place with DAP adhesive caulking. Making sure it was square over the door opening join. (Middle picture).

With the track in place, the cobblestone yard surface, sidewalks and road were added from printed papers and varying thicknesses of card. (Bottom image)





*Newspaper vending machines, flower beds, ornamental clocks and sculptures. These are just some of the tiny details that Ken has added to this layout to make it so rewarding to take the time to study.*



# Glacier

Jeff Latham

N scale: 2mm = 1ft. Size 36" x 4" 915mm x 100mm

**G**lacier is a fairly conventional N scale micro layout sitting on a 36" x 4 1/2" thick balsa wood base framed with similar sheet and finished with strip pine mouldings.

It was designed as the bare minimum to switch modern US rolling stock as a reminder of holidays in Colorado and Alaska and has a single, centrally located turnout.

Originally operated manually with a battery controller and shuffled picture cards for switching spot allocations, it

was upgraded when it was realised that was not a suitable format for public exhibition. The upgrade consisted of carving a space for an SG90 servo beneath the turnout and creating an Arduino powered radio controller with a receiver box plugging into the battery controller sockets.

To replace the cards, RGB smart LEDs are used to correspond with the switching spots colour matched to the cars in use: 4 for 50ft cars and 6 for 40ft cars. A press of a button provides a random selection of coloured spots.



Glacier as presented. The adjustable LED light tray is supported on patent aluminium profile shelf supports bolted to the storage box. (I like the light support idea - Ed.)



A natural arrangement of buildings.



*A typically American Railroad scene with trains close to the main street.*



*The controls. The Receiver box (the long thin box under the nameplate) has lights that show the turnout setting, and LED's for the positions of the cars on the layout. The Controller has centre off throttle at bottom, and switches for the layout lighting, point/turnout operation and generating a new set of car positions.*



*Left hand side.*



*Lots of street detail hidden around the corner.*

# Dizendorf

Eric Geneau

Scale:H0 Size 39" x 12" 1000mm x 300mm



An overall view of Dizendorf.

**M**any articles have been published about micro layouts in the British specialized press by well-known modelers, like Iain Rice, Nigel Adam and Ian Futers. A similar culture also exists across the Channel, in France, and for similar reasons: lack of space at home, limited resources.

I encountered the French railway modeling culture in April 2016, during a trip to Paris. A planned tour of the local model shops allowed me to discover the *Loco-Revue* magazine, as well as their Special issues and their *Clés* for the train miniature spinoff. I lived in Paris afterwards for professional reasons from 2019 to 2023 and thus had the chance to join a local club and learn more about the way train modeling is practiced in this country.

The *Clés pour le train miniature* magazine is published bi-monthly and is dedicated to present layout building techniques. Over the period of a year (6 magazines), an author builds an entire layout. The magazine is accessible online via magazine apps like Libby and Zinio, so if your local library has a subscription to online press services you should be able to have access to this magazine.

For their 10th anniversary, in magazine number 61, a micro-layout plan was built and published, Port Dizan (contraction for Dix ans, or in English Ten years). The Port Dizan plan became quite popular in the local modelling community, and many layouts have been built and presented online since its inception.

As the bulk of my locos and rolling stock is German (mainly Märklin), I made the decision to use the plan for a generic Nebenbahn (branch line) station. For the baseboard I used two hardwood Casani 50 X 30 cm boxes from Boesner, a

German artist material shop. The sides of the cameo have been built with 15mm plywood boards cut to size. The backdrop is made from 5mm MDF, and the cover 5mm plywood. Lighting is provided by an LED tube. The cameo height is 40 cm.

I like to use latex paint (*emulsion*) to paint the wooden pieces, external color is sage green, internal is light grey. Tracks, solenoids and turnouts are from the Märklin C Gleis range. I prefer to use the long turnouts (equivalent to number 8), versus the short ones which look too toyish. The platforms are built using sheet styrene, Evergreen profiles and Auhagen parts. The structures were built using again sheet styrene, profiles, Auhagen and Kibri polystyrene parts. The station is a well-known Faller kit. I've been building models for 45 years and for me nothing looks more plastic than unpainted plastic.

*Editor says: I have enjoyed checking out the French magazine Clés pour le train miniature off and on for quite a while.*

*The "Port Dizan" concept excited me. There were some very interesting and varied interpretations of the idea in all scales and gauges.*

Lance Mindheim has explained over the years the importance of color harmony in a layout. It's then important for me to start the finishing process with a good base. First step is a layer of primer, grey or black, sprayed directly from the can. I prefer using dedicated modelling primer, like Tamiya of Vallejo.

An airbrush is my tool of choice, and I start the finishing process of my structures by pre-shading over the primer coat. I built up the color layers from the palest color to the darkest ones, which means that a lot of masking is required throughout the process. I use post-shading as well as wash techniques or the weathering. Upon completion of the painting process, I fixed the structures permanently to the layout.

Next step is dedicated to the completion of the track works. I always ballast my Märklin tracks, then paint

the tracks/ballast with a dark grey color, using an airbrush. I clean the top of the rails immediately before the paint cures, then paint with a brush rust with a dark brown color. The following step is a drybrush using a pale gray, acrylic color. Weathering is done by spraying a very diluted rusty brown (*not too dark*) color, followed by a light beige dry brushing. The final step is to spray a black line between the track to represent oil drops.

I glued 3mm foam board pieces to fill part of the space between the tracks, then covered them with a thin layer of modelling clay. I then painted the clay dark brown and added a layer of static grass with my brand-new Noch Gras-Master (*a birthday gift from the kids*).

The layout is digitally operated with a Mobile Station 2. Being generic in appearance I'm able to use both my DR and DB rolling stock.



Top picture: All the elements of the baseboard disassembled and assembled in the bottom image.



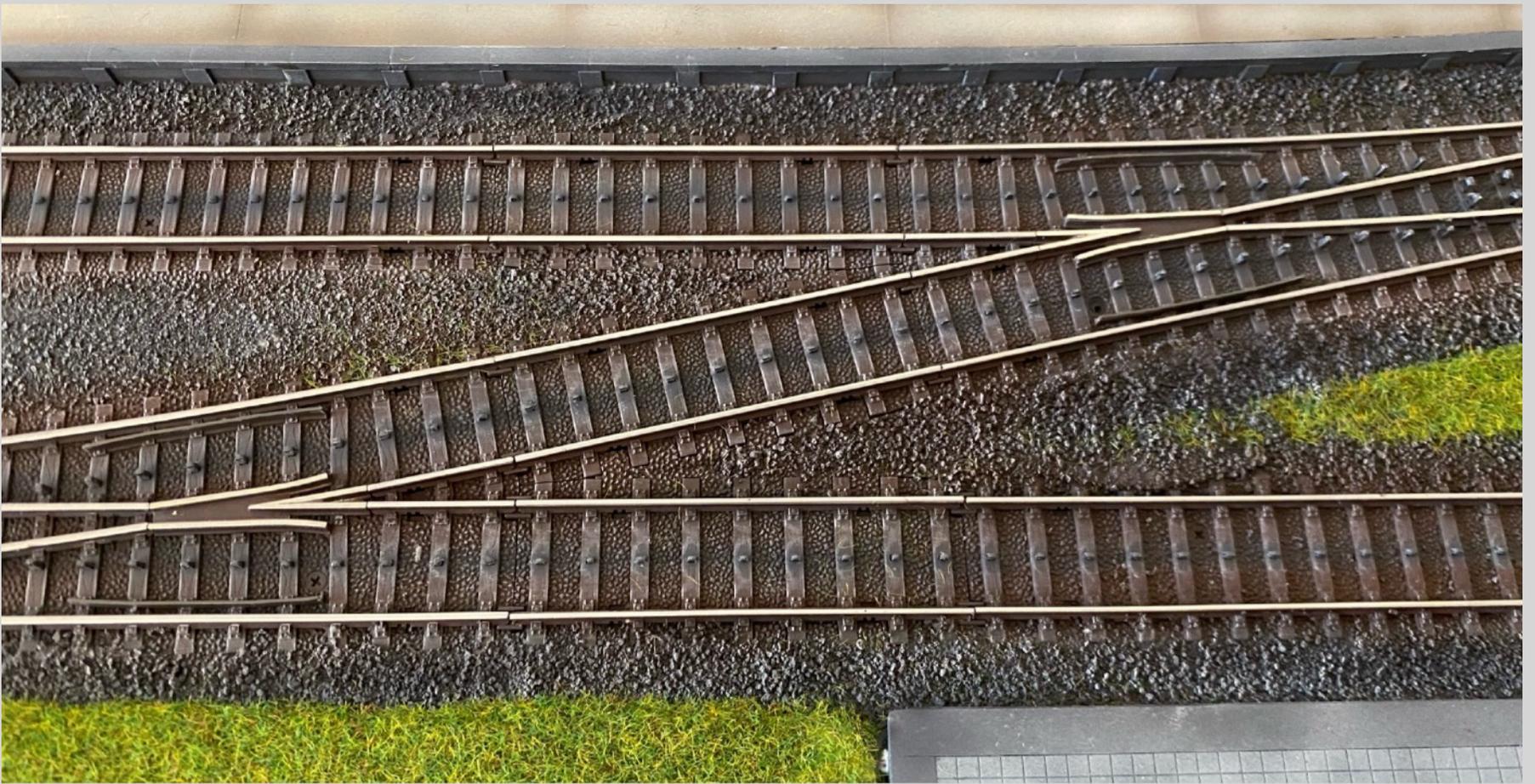
Construction photos: Top. The track is laid and the substructure for the station area is in place  
 Below: Building the road over bridge, fiddle yard exit.



Track in place and ground level built up with foam board and modeling clay.



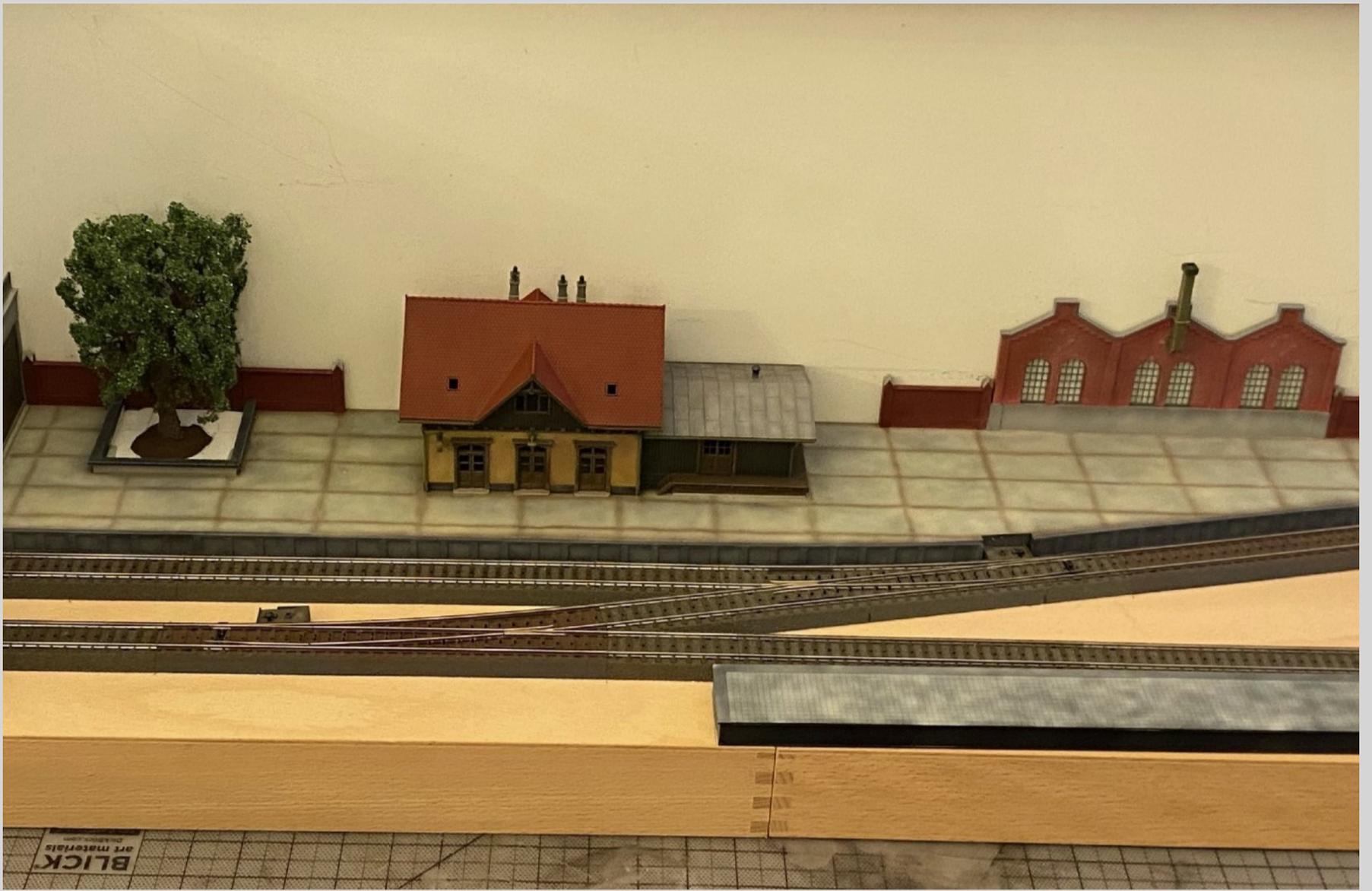
Low relief back scene buildings taking shape.



*Track very effectively weathered. Note the oily streak down the centre of the sleepers.*



*The station building is a very typical German design, and is a Faller kit that should be very familiar to modelers. Eric's weathering of the structure is very subtle and effective.*



*These two images contrast the effectiveness of good lighting. Everything “pops” under the cabinet presentation and lighting.*



*Dizandorf has a very lovely clean feel to the presentation.*

# Christmas Train Show

Tom Bowdler

Some pictures of his display at a local train show



The display at a local Christmas Train show. Though it centered on his live steam locomotive collection, his micro layouts garnered much attention, and passers by were encouraged to check out *The Dispatch*. What is quite shocking is the size comparison between some of his micro's and his live steam locomotives!



To the left here you see a picture of Tom's Big Bend Scenic Railway Pizza layout. Tom has promised a write up on this charmer soon.

# Holmeswell

Rob Jackson

Scale: 009 (4mm:ft 9mm gauge) Size 21" x 4" 550mm x 100mm



*Overall view of this super tiny micro layout.*

**H**olmeswell is one of those layouts that came about more by chance rather than design.

Whenever the annual Cartel Christmas Challenge is announced, my first go to is always the sketchbook set aside for model railway ideas. There's loads of scribbles in there, not just of track plans but also of compositions of scenery, it's a fun exercise. So for the 2025 challenge I set to work doodling a few tuning fork ideas.

Despite a Tywyn Wharf inspired scheme tempting me I couldn't quite find the urge to make a go of it.

I'll hold my hands up, prior to this challenge I always viewed the tuning fork as a poor relation to the inglenook plan. Sorry! Instead I turned my attention to another project: Putting the finishing touches to a scratch-built 'Toby' style steam tram in 009.

Then April 1st came around. Ian Holmes put out a tongue in cheek April Fools video on his YouTube channel waxing lyrical about how his new layout was going to be the best thing since sliced bread. It was going to fit on an IKEA Mosslanda shelf, be built to the highest of P4 standards, and themed around... Toby the Tram Engine!

*Editor says: Yes. I remember it well. It seemed like a good idea at the time...*

Immediately the idea of a humorous response to this came to mind. The sketchbook was flung open, the few books I have on the Wisbech & Upwell tramway taken from the bookcase for reference, and an evening was spent working out how to fit a scene from the line into the tiny Mosslanda footprint.

The obvious choice was the terminus at Upwell: remove the turnouts for the run-round loops and you've essentially got multiple tuning forks stacked one after the other. Scenically though there wasn't much to offer, besides the waiting shelter, water tower and the ground level platforms the area was totally flat open fields.

Looking for other options, the line terminated at Outwell Depot when originally opened. Again, removing a lot of the track work showed the basic outline of a tuning fork, and here the scenery was much busier: The old canal and bridge in the foreground, the road cutting across the tramway, the yard office, the row of cottages and the Church of St. Lawrence looking down on everything. It was going to prove a challenge to try and include all the elements!



*This aerial view of the track plan shows how Rob used a Y point instead of conventional left or right-handed turnouts. Normally a Y point is used to save space. But this layout is so far under the competition three square foot limit that it's a moot point.*



*A short goods train enters the sidings.*



*The lowest viewpoint can make the tiniest locomotive look impressive.*

At this point I'd already lost a month in construction time so to get back up to speed a flatpack baseboard kit was sourced from Narrow Minded Railworks. This is a fun alternative to the usual baseboard construction, though a few simple alterations were made to help with the scenic side. The trackbed was raised up on a few offcuts of scrap: one by half inch battening saved from the bin at work (*A surprisingly good source for modelling materials!*) with the matching fiddle stick being modified in the same way for a consistent height. The lighting pelmet also took a few attempts at bashing to get the desired lighting effect, in the end making a James Hilton style pelmet to stop all the foreground stock and scenery being in shadow. Truthfully, I still need to go back and work on this again, as the current depth isn't quite enough to hide the LED strip in some photos.

The only piece of scenery that needed buying in to complete the scene was the pub and cottage, these being a combination of the Crimple Cottage and No.12 Station Road low relief kits from Petite Properties. These are more scratch aids rather than complete kits, but I'd wanted to have a try at these after seeing them used to great effect as a backscene on Michael Campbell's Loctern Quay micro layout. To help backdate the frontage of No.12 a victorian shop frontage was sourced from ScaleModelScenery and suitably painted to become 'The Toby' public house. All other scenic items (bar figures and the Airfix Matador lorry) were either items that were in the stash of kits or scratch built.

A fun challenge with the size of the layout was trying to make it look deeper than it really is. You'll notice that almost everything, with the exceptions of pub, weigh bridge and waiting shelter are all at an angle. The road itself also

tapers inwards slightly towards the back scene making it seem further, a effect borrowed from a most unlikely source, ghost train scenery!

The final way of creating the illusion of depth is based on good old art school colour theory, with paler shades being used on the back scene to create a faint sense of haze.

Operations wise the layout idea has almost gone full circle, being operated in a style similar to how Tywyn Wharf would have been pre-preservation. All passenger trains start and terminate here, though passengers are discouraged from joining the train here, despite the waiting shelter. After leaving the depot and crossing the road the line runs down Arendt Street (*and off the layout!*) before crossing the road again at the junction with Conboy Road and into a 'Pendre' style station and yard.

With so little traffic at this point, mixed or freight only trains are very much the order of the day, a second locomotive being the wharf pilot to release the train engine and shunt any wagons left in the yard in-between. After all the votes had been counted, it was quite a nice surprise to see Holmeswell reach a very respectable 2nd place in the standings. Not bad at all considering this was very much built as a 'joker' entry!

There's a strong urge to have another go at a Mosslanda micro (*Or perhaps the slightly longer Maleras shelf*) With a bit of compression it looks as if an Ian Futer's style three point plan arrangement could fit...

Watch this space!



*Every thing works together to create this very busy scene.*



*Clearly the pub called "The Toby" makes an excellent background for Rob's locomotives.*



*"Look officer. I just need to park here for a couple of minutes."*



*The effective illusion of depth is based on the good old art school colour theory, with paler shades being used on the back scene to create a faint sense of haze.*



*The local vicar passes the time with the stationmaster while waiting for his train.*



*The train has arrived. One of those new-fangled rail busses.*

# Fiddle Yard - Clyde House Farm Sidings

Ian Holmes

The editor describes the background to his "Project 100" layout

**A**s my YouTube channel (*The Model Railways of Ian Holmes*) reached 100 videos, I paused for a moment. I was amazed that I had managed to keep producing videos every week for the best part of two years. All this time building up a solid viewership, of approaching 700, who are involved with the channel's output.

I thought 100 was a pretty big deal. So I decided to commemorate the milestone with a project layout. A build like some of my previous layouts like *Wingett's Recycling* and *Stafford Ledge Tramway*, layouts that were built and documented in daily blog posts.

This build would have a slight difference. I asked my viewership to back the project. Like a Patreon, if you will. Some people had suggested that I start a Patreon so this would be a good way to test the waters.

I'm still a little unsure that people would pay money to support me in my hobby. But in the end I was very pleasantly surprised when I reached my financial

target. Lumber, track and a few small scenic items were bought with the backer support.

For their support I promised exclusive daily video updates on the build. This did compromise the build time a little, for instead of carrying on working on the layout, I would have to stop early to edit a video on the day's progress. Even so I still "finished" the layout in approximately 10 days, and 14 days to get it ready for its first exhibition.

As the build progressed, backers offered advice and insights on the project. This interaction was most rewarding.

Not wanting to let the supporters down spurred me on, and I think I have my most accomplished micro layout to date. So much so, that the layout will now go to exhibitions. It was at the Granite City Train Show in Saint Cloud, MN on February 28th, and maybe Trainfest in Milwaukee in November.

If you're interested I'll share more pictures in the next issue of **The Dispatch**.



With work finished at the farm siding. The Terrier waits to leave for Saltfleetby.