

ASSOCIATION OF SHREWSBURY RAILWAY MODELLERS



Llangynllo on the Central Wales Line, September 2021

NOVEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first of our quarterly newsletters. Thank you to all of you who have sent in photos and articles. Please continue to send in material. The next edition will be edited by Peter Cox.

One thing the newsletters can do, which is usually not possible at a meeting, is show off your layouts. Graham Betts has done this with his Earls Bridge layout (made entirely in lockdown!!) To paraphrase Jo Brand, "Show us your layouts!"

Nick Coppin

Quality Control (Or Lack Of)

Is it really me? Have I reached the age when everything is now wrong and believe things worked better in days gone? I am sure I am not alone, but to stick to the relevance of this for model railways I have been appalled, annoyed and exasperated by the poor running qualities of some newer models. There is no doubt that the quality and fine detail now obtained in the manufacture of the bodies has moved on apace, as have the motors and electronics; but it is the assembly of the models that so frequently detracts from what would otherwise be a perfect model. Am I wrong to think that a new locomotive should run perfectly straight from the box, or as modellers should we accept a measure of tweaking to obtain perfection? I think most of us are tolerant of minor glitches and rise to the challenge of overcoming minor shortfalls in running problems. But would we accept such shortcomings with a purchase unrelated to the hobby?

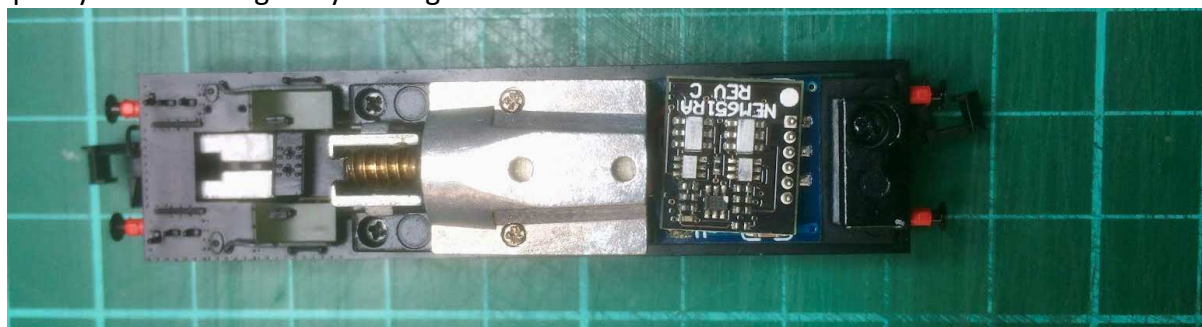
Is it the case manufacturers have achieved perfection in detail at the expense of running quality, after all if a locomotive does not run well it is not likely to be used much, if at all. I

have a number of old locos, as I am sure many have, that lack today's detail but run smoothly and quietly and are therefore regularly used. As children we used our imagination and perhaps we still do, such that when a loco is running well any lack of detail is happily overlooked. In fact in the smaller gauges much of this detail cannot be seen unless viewed at close quarters.

So what has brought this to my mind? Well since the Earl's Hall layout has been fully functional I have been playing rather than making scenery etc., and of three recent purchases, three have been, well, not fully satisfactory, and have given me the excuse for a rant.

First was a weed-killing set which included two powered class 20s topping and tailing. No amount of fiddling with CV.5 on each would bring about a match suggesting the two motors were poles apart in performance (pun intended). Clearly it is essential that the locos be equally matched, so where was the quality control? I am pleased to say that the replacement by the retailer provided a pair that needed no adjustment.

Second was a tank locomotive that had been a while in gestation and consequently eagerly awaited. Running in on DC took over 4 hours of perseverance and patience before I removed the body to fit a decoder. It was then I found that the instructions for the body removal were not exactly correct - actually it was easier than suggested, but that is not the point. The point is when did we last see a well written set of instructions? The manufacturer had recommended a particular chip, a right angled example, so this was a special purchase as my stock consisted only of 6 pin and Next 18's cunningly purchased from Germany before Brexit. So the chip was obtained and fitted and the chassis run for some basic programming before the body was replaced - experience has shown this to be a wise move. But having spent all these hours to reach this stage I then found the chip fouled the body. The reason being that the plastic socket into which the chip plugs had been fitted at an angle such that a corner of the chip now fouled the body. (The blanking plug was smaller and so did not foul). I am now told the loco cannot be replaced as the problem is widespread (or maybe universal). The manufacturer has suggested alternative smaller bespoke chips to overcome the problem, but one has to ask why this was not pointed out at the time of purchase, perhaps as an addendum to the fitting instructions? Or perhaps the question is again one of quality control being sadly lacking. I have returned the model for a refund.



And then another long-awaited model, an HST set, arrived yesterday. An absolutely fantastic representation and I was delighted with it until I started to run it in on DC. Although a shade hesitant at first it did get going but then derailed on every point in each direction. I do admit that my track laying may not be as good as it should be but every other loco is fine. As you will have already guessed the loco came out of the factory with the wrong back to back setting such that the bogies mounted the check rails. After running for an hour though it still remains very noisy in reverse. Perhaps things will improve with further running? And

then we come to fitting the light bars to the coaches, which according to the instructions “simply clip into the roof”. No they do not – they are loose and nowhere near the suggested clip fit. Nothing that a bit of Blu-tack has remedied, but surely none of this should be, should it?

Or is it me being curmudgeonly? Am I the original “disgusted” of Tunbridge Wells? And then, of all manufacturers one would expect Fleischmann to be spot on. But no, the bridge on the [very expensive] turntable had to be removed and shimmed in order to overcome incorrect vertical alignment.

Perhaps the foregoing just means I have been unlucky (the Friday car syndrome?) but one thing that has received much critical attention with N gauge modellers is the unreliability of the Rapido coupling. I cannot recall such problems before the NEM standard, nor indeed with the Peco Elsie coupling, not that I am criticising the NEM coupling as the advantages are great, but it would again seem that the fault lies in the quality control to ensure the coupling boxes are fitted correctly. One manufacturer has even admitted on line that his TEA wagons could have a coupling problem and suggests a remedy for the modeller to carry out. Perhaps we should be considered 'consumers' in the eyes of the manufacturer, as indeed we are in the eyes of the law? Fortunately West Hill Wagon Works have produced several types of magnetic couplings under the brand name “Hunt Couplings”. These not only work well but can enable closer coupling, if so desired. Just more time and money to correct these manufacturing faults. End of rant!

Mike Bennett

Earls Bridge

Earls Bridge is the name of my Yorkshire based 00-gauge layout built over the Covid period. Whilst there is much still to do, I hope the photos provide some interest.

Purely by coincidence with the start of the pandemic, I had planned the basics and bought all of the timber required for construction. Other items needed since were obtained by mail order.

The basis of my model is a fictional Yorkshire Joint Railway formed by the MR and NER, as were several actual arrangements in the Yorkshire area. Some research revealed that the NER operated over MR rails into the north of Bradford to Forster Square Station, and around 1906 the MR was buying up property in Bradford to work a route south of the City via cuttings and tunnels. It never happened, but does give me the excuse to model what could have been...Based on a simple oval, the backside is storage yards and the other three sides form the scenic stuff. The track is SMP bullhead for the up line and Peco bullhead for the down line. The wiring is done to retain natural sections allowing DC operation and also the disaster called DCC. A couple of points are Peco bullhead with the others scratch built. All are operated by SEEP motors.

I have a long-standing interest in pre-grouping and the time of nationalisation, and so the general livery for buildings is broadly that of the MR, which also lends itself to the LMS.

The buildings are a mix of scratch built ‘plasticard’ and a few Metcalfe kits, which will be replaced over time. The only other kit is the Ratio MR signal box. The station footbridge is a ‘used’ Hornby model modified to suit the platform height and some used Hornby viaduct

sections providing elevated track services for Power Station coal delivery. One of the trickier jobs to do will be the replacement of background boards with taller, and hopefully 'Bob Ross' quality items! With a few exceptions signalling is still required. The photos provide most of the other detail including shots of the dry-stone walls I spoke about at the recent meeting.



General view.



Station with new unfinished allotments and yard in background.



South signal box with drystone walls now fitted.



North end of yard and good shed.



Brewery located to the north of the station.



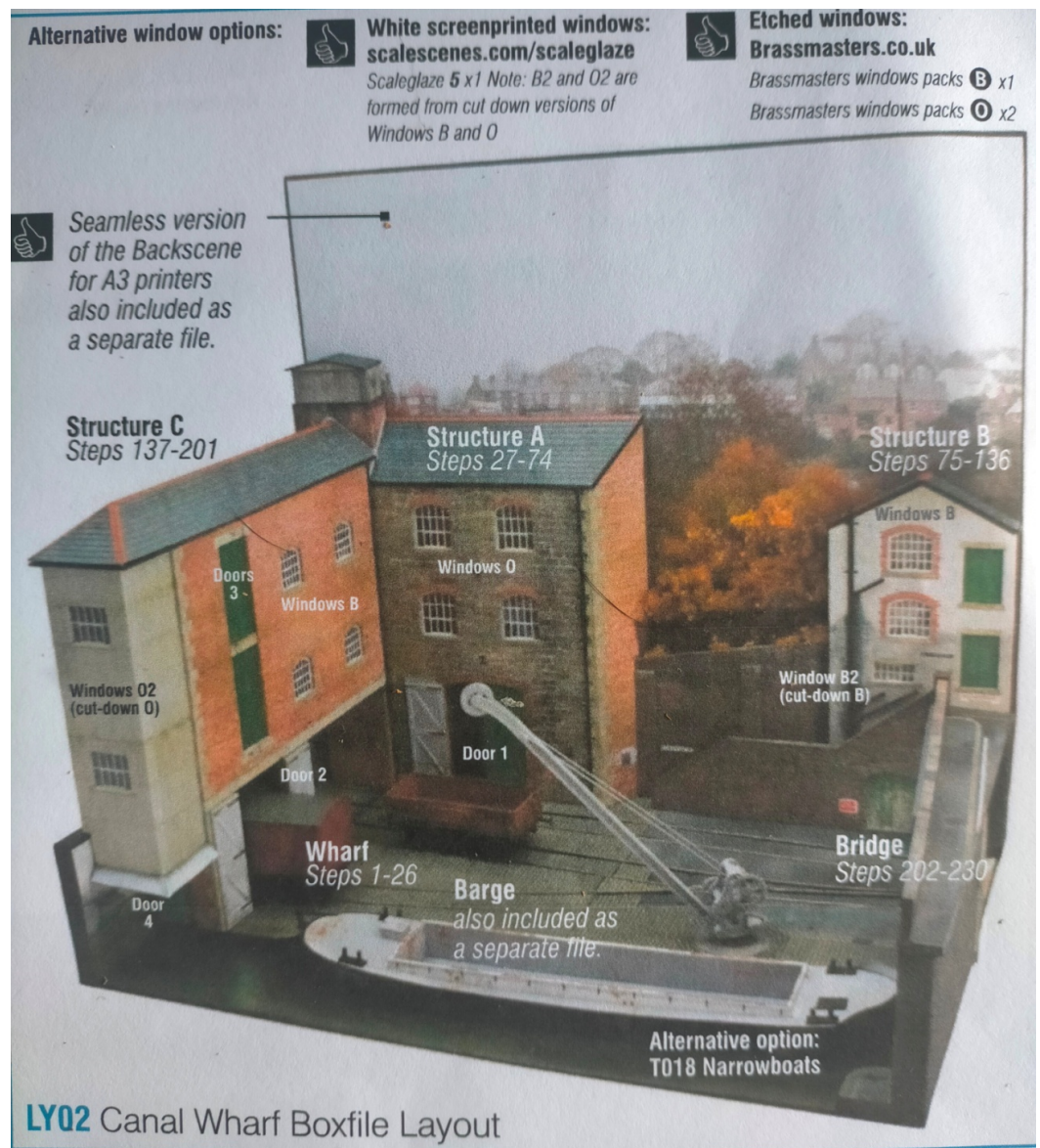
Power Station, Brewery and a couple of Metcalf Workers Cottage at the north end of the track; view looking south.

Graham Betts

Scalescenes box file layout.

Here are some photos of a compact diorama from George Nutter. He says he is ".....just seeing how it goes and if I can make a reasonable job of it."

The canal boat is done and he is currently working in the box file elements as per the photos.







George Nutter

Notes from the Workbench

Attention has turned recently to several small projects /completions, as an attempt to reduce the ever growing 'works list'.

The Hornby B1.

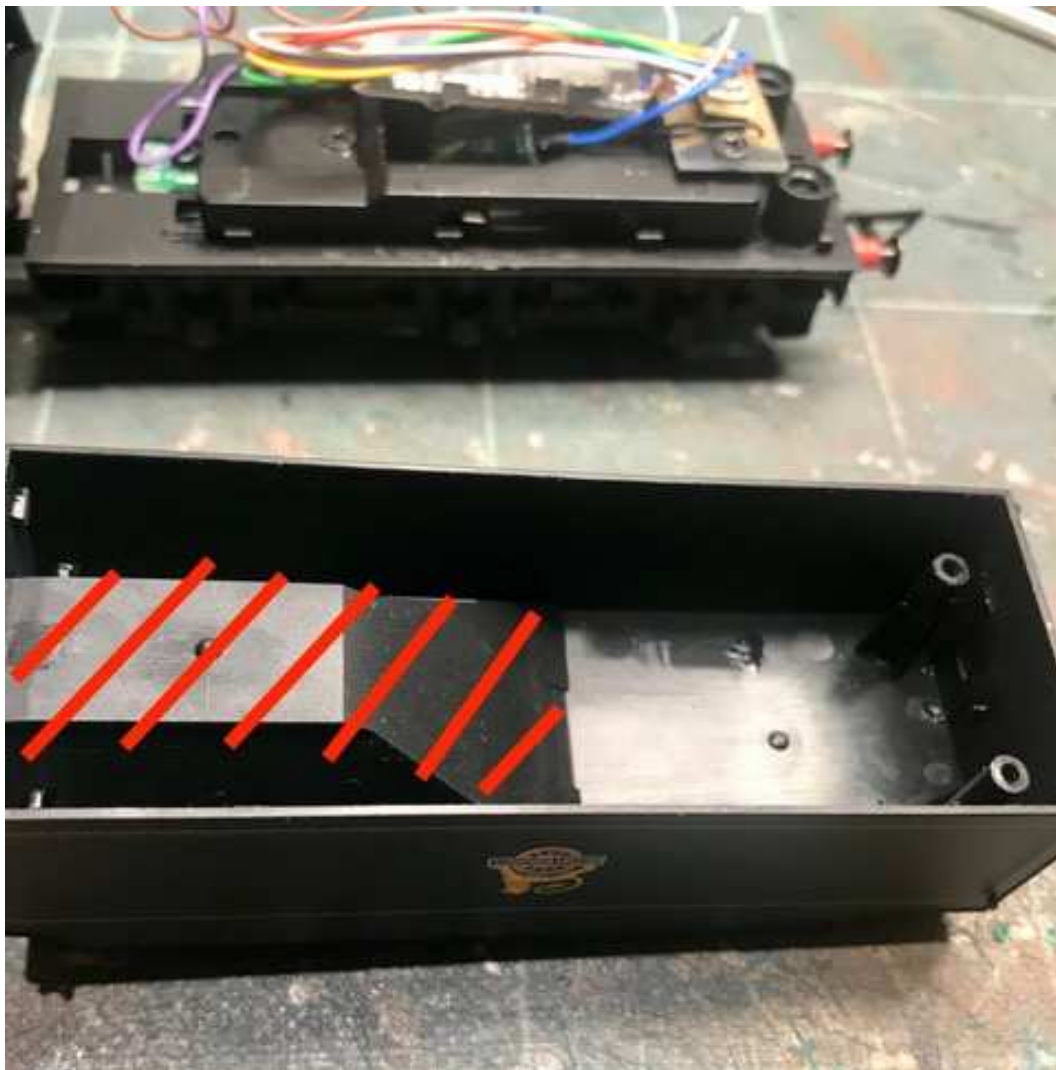
I have had this model, along with a suitable sound decoder, un-opened, for well over a year and it was time to get it suitable to run on Dearness Valley Junction; my BR (NE) 1959-1964 layout. As delivered, the Hornby B1 was in lined black with the early emblem on the tender, so this was always going to have to be changed. I also wanted to re-number and re-name the loco to one which was pictured at the junction in July 1963 in one of a series of images taken by a fellow member of the Shropshire Railway Society who had spent the best part of a day there that year.

The first job was to fit the sound decoder and speaker. This was all going to fit in the tender but I knew I would have to hack out the coal chute to create enough space for the relatively large sugar cube speaker I intended to use. These days I usually source steam sound decoders from YouChoos as I have found these to be consistently better steam sounds than a number of other options. The paper work from YouChoos is also superb. Wish I had discovered them sooner!



The Zimo decoder out of the packet as supplied by YouChoos, with my chosen speaker already wired.

Fitting the decoder (a ZIMO MX645R) was very straightforward and YouChoos had conveniently soldered the double speaker to the appropriate leads. The inside of the tender, or more accurately the underside of the tender top, needed even more hacking about than I anticipated but given I like to have pretty full coal load on my locos I knew I could disguise it all from above.



The hatched area under the tender top to be removed.

The loco I wanted to create was 61038 'Blacktail'. Modelmaster Jackson Evans do a very helpful re-numbering pack which contains the cabside numbers (as one decal), nicely etched nameplates and an equally fine etched smokebox door number plate and these were duly ordered. Delivery can be slow but the wait is worthwhile. The tender emblems and electrification flashes were from an old (but still very usable) sheet of HMRS Pressfix Loco and Coach decals.

The first thing to do was to remove the existing cabside numbers and BR emblems on the tenders. This proved rather more difficult than for Bachmann locos treated similarly; MicroSol, my normal 'go to' method, had relatively little effect. Using a sharpened cocktail stick I continued to work away but it was very slow going. I then tried some T-Cut Black car polish restorer on a cotton bud. This proved much more effective and also left a glossy finish (it was a car polish after all) which would mean the new decals would take well.



The T-Cut black scratch remover doing its job - a light touch with a tiny amount on a cotton bud was all that was necessary.

I had managed to confine the rubbing to ensure there was not going to be too much visible effect when the new decals were applied, but I was conscious that a 1963 NE based loco was probably not going to be that clean (confirmed by the working photo) so weathering would come to the rescue if necessary.

It has to be said the Hornby B1 is a really superb model although some of the fittings are very delicate and I have already damaged the cylinder drain tubes which I will have to replace with brass wire. The tender was fitted with a Kaydee coupling (three link at the front) and real coal was used to load the tender itself, fixed into PVA. The front steps are still to be fitted; the photos show it in otherwise ex-works condition but it has an appointment with the airbrush coming up (do I really want to mess it up??) after which loco crew will be added from Alan Buttler's excellent ModelU range (he has different loco crew for different types of loco – not every class.)



The (almost) finished job. Front steps to be attached and (probably) plenty of weathering. It is a superb model in my view.

The Oxford Rail J27

This project was with the eagerly awaited Oxford Rail J27 which first came out in LNER livery in late March this year followed by the BR (late emblem) livery in the early summer. It was this later version that I had pre-ordered. At this point I have to admit that I already have a J27 in the shape of the faultless Dave Bradwell etched kit that was built by Simon Bolton from Ludlow, a couple of years ago. In one very real sense then Oxford Rail model was therefore on a hiding to nothing, not helped by the rather mixed reviews that had appeared in the magazines. There are indeed some design issues and although I have not measured things up, the dome and chimney are not the right shape and the smokebox door is a little too flat compared to the prototype. (Tim Lewis is convinced Dave Bradwell will be doing a roaring trade in replacement parts from his own stable.) Another slight irritation is that the cab to tender fall plate, although possibly true to scale, is not long enough to stay resting on the tender even on gentle fine-scale curves; this was remedied by extending the fall plate with some fine plasticard.

All that said, there is much else that is good. It runs very smoothly and quietly and the interior of the cab – especially the backhead – is excellent. It also came with fine three link couplings for user fitting and the finest etched fire irons that I have ever seen; they are truly finescale. Where the RTR J27 wins hands down however is on the price: at about £87 in 4mm scale it is astonishing value by current standards.

Another fault (omission) is that the user guide is barely of any value; I had picked up one or two points from reviews in mags and on the net but when there are design features of real value to the modeller, about which explanation (or even mention) is not made, it is an open goal. A case in point is the provision of a mounting for a suitable sugar cube speaker directly under where the sound decoder sits.



The deep box for a substantial sugar cube speaker in the bottom of the tender.

What is more, and to be fair what is incredibly user friendly, is that the underside of the PCB has two lugs which engage directly with the tabs on the speaker that you would normally solder the speaker wires to. It remains to be seen how long this direct contact remains functional, but it meant that after removing the tender top it took me no more than five minutes to drop the speaker cube into the neat rectangle, screw the PCB down, remove the keeper plate and plug in the decoder.



The speaker dropped in to place



PCB screwed back down, and 21 sounder decoder plugged in above. Job done!

I have never had an easier loco to fit with a sound decoder (a Zimo MX644 21 pin in this case.) Although the NYMR has a recently returned to traffic J27, at the time of writing I am not aware of an available direct recording of a J27, although I am sure one will come. Both my J27s have a J94 (WD 0-6-0 saddle tank) sound recording as recommended by Dave Bradwell.

This project did not need re-numbering or badging and with the appointment for a good 'dirty-up' coming soon, followed by the crew arriving for duty, revenue earning service beckons. I will just have to keep it away from its older sister...



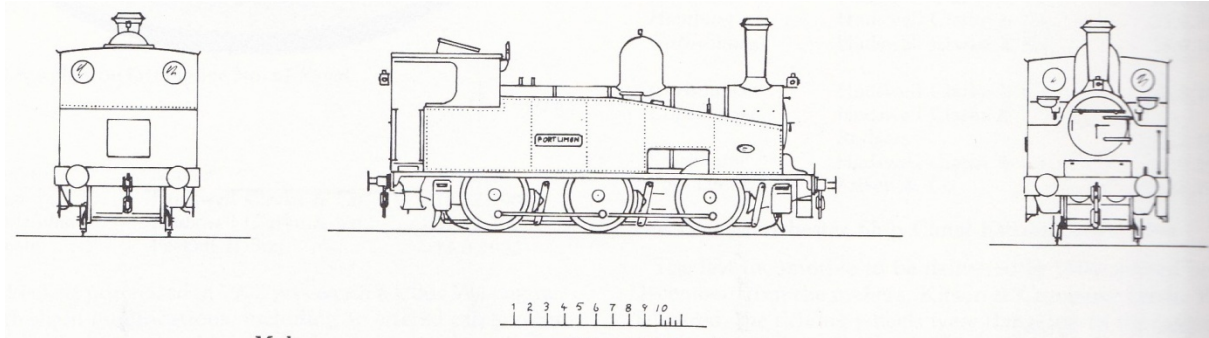
J27 on it's first revenue earning trip of empties. Driver Tim Lewis at the controls.

Gordon Woods

Building a live steam locomotive in 0 gauge

There is a story, probably apocryphal, about a chap stopping his car to ask a local how to get to an obscure destination. The reply was "Well I wouldn't start from here!" I feel a bit like that with this project. Were I to do it again, I would start from somewhere else.

I had already built a very simple 16mm scale steam engine and a nearly-as-simple Gauge 1 tram but I wanted to have a go in 0 gauge. So I looked around for a suitable prototype. I wanted an industrial loco one might have found at a coal mine. I found this simple sketch of a loco from the Manchester Ship Canal.

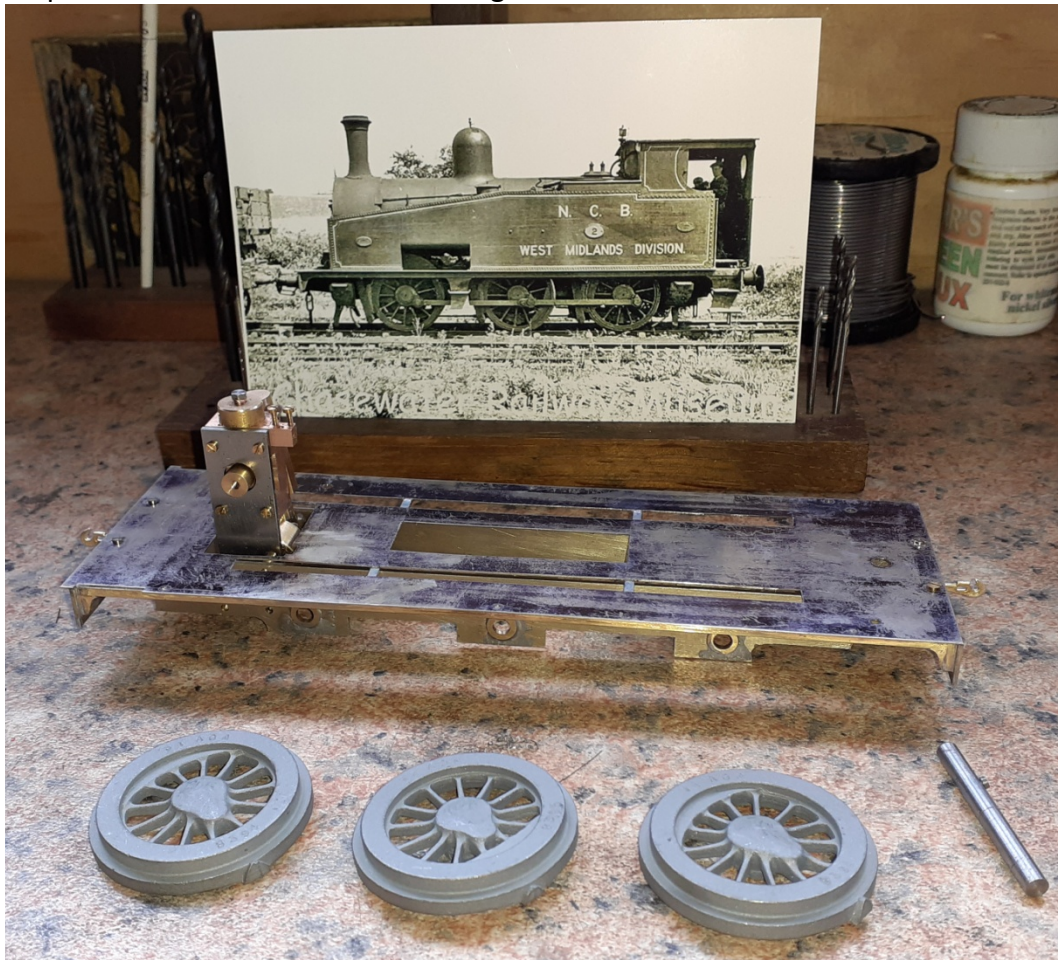


It was built by Kitson of Leeds and seemed to fit the bill. I wanted to make a 'pot' boiler; that is a simple tube with the burner beneath it, heating it like a saucepan on the stove. I did not want the burner to blow out, so a full length side tank would be good, it would also hide the burner from view. To keep things simple, I intended using a single cylinder oscillating 'steam motor' geared down 4:1. I managed to hide this in the enclosed cab. I wanted a meths burner, as I cannot get on with gas and don't like to hear it roaring. I did not want to have outside dummy cylinders as they cause friction and make more work. The MSC Kitson did seem ideal. It became more ideal as I discovered that the National Coal Board ran a very similar loco at Coppice Colliery near Cannock. I have based my model on that loco.

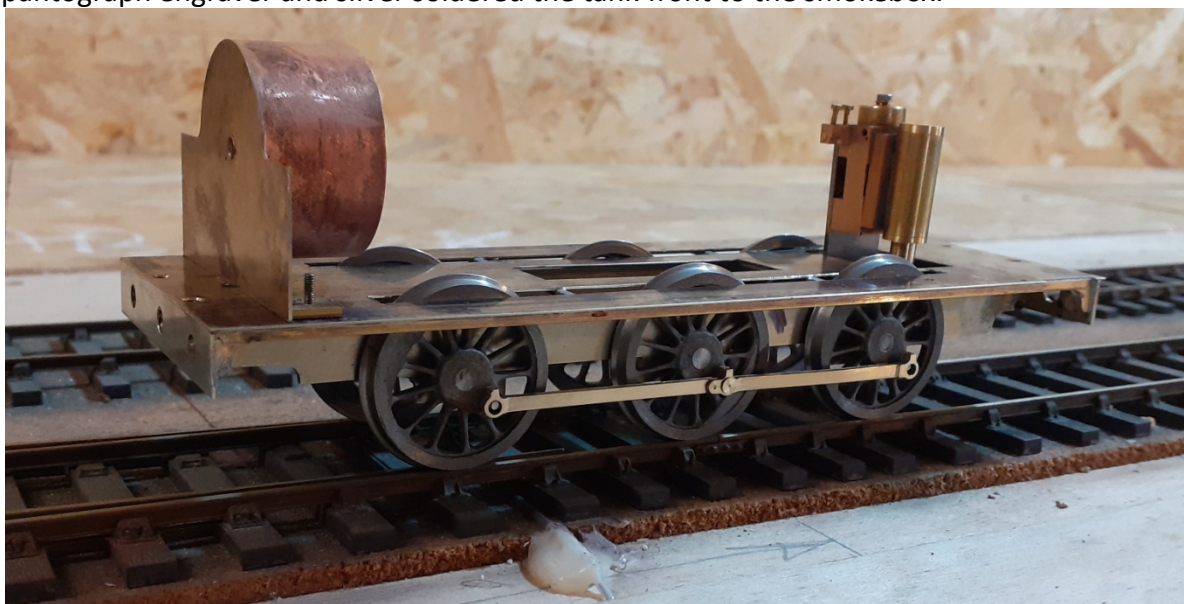
The main thing I lacked was an accurate drawing and this caused all kinds of bother and re-workings. There were similar locos on the Cardiff Railway and the GWR produced weight diagrams of these, which helped a bit. Next time, I will build something for which I have much better drawings! I started drawing it up in 3D modelling CAD which allows me to ensure everything fits. You can even revolve the crank and see the valve ports opening and closing as the piston goes up and down. I started with the 'steam motor' to make sure it would work and then made mainframes and spacers.



I added footplate and bufferbeams. The wheels have 13 spokes and Mark Wood agreed to make cast iron wheels for me to machine. These proved to be beautifully made with nice, slender spokes and the correct balance weights.



He also provided very detailed machining instructions and sketches and sold me a profile tool for the lathe. The castings were quite expensive so I took great care in machining them to his instructions and finishing the wheel profile with the tool. I made side rods on the pantograph engraver and silver soldered the tank front to the smokebox.



As the construction progressed, I came to realize that while the pot boiler might be simpler

to make, it has drawbacks. The principal one being the heating up of the side tanks. The alternative flue boiler, has the fire inside and needs a blower to keep it alight. The heat, however, is used to boil water and make steam. The heat from a pot boiler, blows around in the wind and heats up anything it comes into contact with. If you soft solder the side tanks, the flames from the meths burner can easily melt all your joints! So I stuffed the side tanks with fireproof wadding and lined the boiler with tinplate shields to contain the flames. It does get hot but not enough to melt the solder so far.....

The only copper tube I could find of the correct diameter was 1/16" wall thickness which is quite beefy for a small boiler. It also takes a bit more heat to warm up from cold. One advantage is that I could mount it in the lathe and turn the boiler bands on the outside surface of the boiler without making it appreciably thinner. The sloping tank sides have hundreds of rivets and I spent a while embossing these in tinplate using a riveting tool of Tony Reynolds design. After two whole days making the smokebox door and a couple more on the dome and chimney, it was starting to look a bit like an engine.



Nick Coppin

Wadebridge: North Cornwall in the 1960s

Latest Developments

In the April 2021 Newsletter I described plans drawn up by my friend Phil Herdson to build an N Scale layout based on Wadebridge, on the long-closed North Cornwall line near its terminus at Padstow. Phil is a lifelong railway enthusiast, and a member of neighbouring railway club, MADRAS (the Much Wenlock and District Railway Appreciation Society). We hope to see Phil at an ASRM meeting in the near future – and perhaps to persuade him to give a presentation on his railway and modelling activities.

I have also described my progress on constructing the signal boxes and goods shed for Wadebridge, both online and during our September meeting.

Since then, progress on the layout has consisted of moving one step back and two steps forward: Phil had originally commissioned a professional layout builder in Cheltenham to build the baseboard and lay the track. However, this person recently pulled out of the project on the grounds that he was too busy. Phil is now speaking with another professional

baseboard builder - Andy Altoft of Hoggies Model Railways, based in Highworth, near Swindon. Andy previously built a layout for a mutual friend - Ian Luxton, who lives at Middleton, near Ludlow – to a very high standard. Phil is nearing agreement on the final baseboard and layout design with Andy, so we are nearly back on track with Wadebridge (no pun intended!).

Meanwhile, the signal boxes and goods shed are complete and the main station building is well under way. Although the station itself was quite straightforward to build, the roof profile is unusual. This in turn made the slate roof difficult to fabricate. The best commercial N Scale roofing slates I am aware of are made by Ratio; unfortunately, at 1.5mm they are quite thick, which makes them difficult to fabricate into the small sections required to build the Wadebridge station roof. I therefore made my own from 10 thou (0.25mm) plain plastikard sheet, scribed with a scawker – as described by Geoff Kent in a presentation to us a couple of years ago – and cut into strips. These were carefully overlapped and stuck to the plain roof profile which had been previously fixed to the building. I am very pleased with the result, and I will probably use this technique again.

I enclose a selection of photographs of my progress to date, including the part-completed station building.



Completed East Signal Box



Completed West Signal Box



Completed Goods Shed, station forecourt side



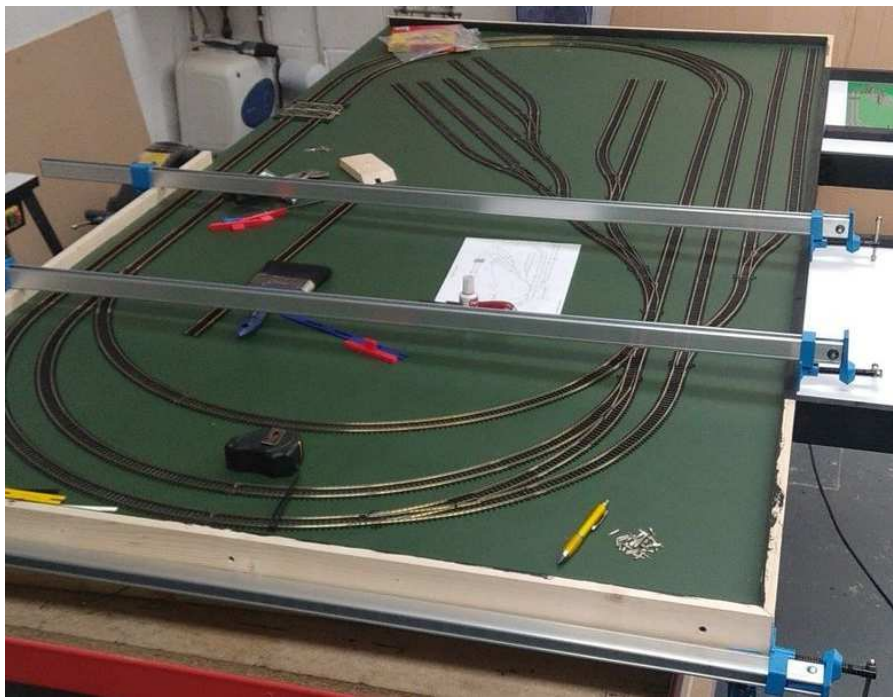
Completed Goods Shed, platform side



Station building; work in progress, station forecourt side



Station building; work in progress, platform side.



A Hoggies layout under construction



The underside of a Hoggies layout, showing the high quality of the track wiring.

Dave Gotliffe

Modelling Inspiration.



Old shops signs from Llangynllo, Powys.