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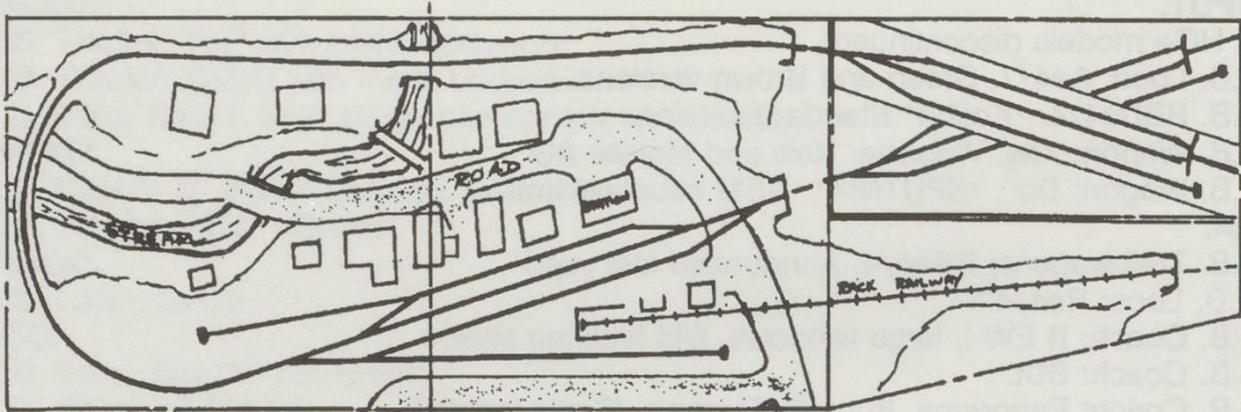
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ALPENDORF

A layout based on the Rh.B.. Built by R. Thomas.

As an admirer of the Swiss Railway scene for many years, I was attracted to the BEMO range of Swiss metre-gauge models from its introduction many years ago. I was not, however, so happy with the 12mm gauge BEMO track, with the small profile stock it tended to look like TT scale standard gauge - and the 9mm gauge version looked far too narrow. As most of the BEMO range is available for either 9 or 12mm gauge, the wheels are mounted on splined axles and investigation showed that it would be perfectly feasible to modify locos and stock to 10.5mm gauge, so that I could use the 'Shinohara' track made for the American HO narrow gauge market and which looks just right for Swiss Metre-gauge. (Recently of course, Shinohara has produced a very nice 12mm gauge track for BEMO.)



Alpendorf Trackplan.

The Rh.B. was accordingly incorporated into my home layout, and as more stock was obtained it was decided to build a portable layout for exhibition purposes. This would involve a friend Maurice Taylor, and would give us another layout to ring the changes on the local exhibition circuit. The BEMO models would fulfil our requirements for reliability, smooth operation and excellent appearance.

The layout would have to meet several criteria: it must be transportable in a medium sized hatch back car, allow end to end operation and have a reasonable length of visible track. The resulting track plan is a 'U' shape layout in an area measuring 9 feet x 3 feet with a 4 feet 6 inch extension to house the two level fiddle yard.

The sight of a 'Gerard' rack loco kit at the 'IMREX' exhibition led to a hurried on-the-spot discussion as to how we could incorporate a rack railway into the nearly completed layout. We decided that it could run in front of the fiddle yard in an area previously intended for a photo display, though the extra baseboard would add to the transport problems. The kit plus the track, was duly purchased, and Maurice in a rash moment agreed to build it. He spent many hours assembling it and later dismantling it when a factory fitted worm gear came loose from its shaft after just two hours of running in a three day show. We were not amused! It was also found to be necessary to provide additional power pickup via a permanently coupled coach. Now that these problems have been overcome the rack line does add a great deal of interest, particularly as the drive is via the rack rail leaving the driving wheels to revolve freely as per the prototype. The loco is of course modelled on the Austrian prototype, but the layout is unashamedly freelance and is covered by 'artistic licence'.

The proliferation of tunnels and viaducts on the Rh.B. made it easy to design a 'U' shaped plan which looks reasonably realistic. A curved viaduct (Faller kits) crosses the valley, on the floor of which is a typical mountain stream and road. The wooden station (modified Fides Celerina station kit) serves a village built from local stone (Kibri kits), and the loco shed for the rack railway is a shortened Fides kit of Disentis wooden engine shed. The goods shed and the footbridge over the stream are scratchbuilt from the pieces left over from the Fides kits. Scenery is Pollyfilla and the stream consists of small pieces of slate covered in varnish to give a watery effect.



Rack loco and coach await departure from Alpendorf.

Photo: M. Bayly.

Baseboards are made from plywood with shaped formers for the various levels and contours. It was essential to work from a drawing with full size plans for the critical areas. The control panel is built into the rear of the layout and incorporates two-way switches for each electrical section enabling either of the hand held electronic controllers to feed any section which gives maximum flexibility. Feed-back controllers are used to maintain a constant speed on the gradient, and a separate control is used for the rack railway which is fitted with automatic stop sections (diodes in the track section) at the top and bottom.

Points are operated manually from the rear of the layout, via Bowden cables linked to the points via PECO point motor mounting plates to provide a locking action which is not fitted on the Shinohara point. Apart from scratchbuilt gantries in the station area, the overhead catenary wire supports are by 'Fairfield' (Ex U.S.A. from MG Sharp of Sheffield) with simple tramway type single wire - not correct for the Rh.B. but unobtrusive. The wires unhook at the baseboard joint and are tensioned by springs inside the tunnel mouths. There are no overhead wires in the fiddle yard so all locos run on two rail supply, but pantographs do touch the overhead wire in the viewing area and the resulting rise and fall

is a source of much comment. There are plans to energise the catenary at a later date, to give independent control for a shunter in the station area..

Both fiddle yards are identical in plan, the loco run-round being accomplished via a simple manually operated sector plate. Locos are uncoupled automatically before running onto the sector plate. Operationally an intensive service is run to keep the public interested. Two operators are required, one dealing with the fiddle yards and running trains between the lower yard and the station, where the 'main line' operator takes over and runs the trains into the upper yard. Trains are short, being limited to the length of the fiddle yard loops.

Motive power consists of two Ge4/4^I, one Ge6/6^I, and an F.O. Ge4/4^{III}. A Railcar type ABe4/4 is a very useful addition, though a little long for the sharp curve on the viaduct. Coaches are the shorter versions, which look better on the sharp curves, and there is a selection of freight stock. All the items listed above are made by BEMO.

Although the layout is 'freelance' we have tried to get away from the Christmas tree look, though the general appearance is neat and tidy as per the prototype! The next appearance of ALPENDORF is at Kidderminster Technical College on March 10/11.



Rh.B. Krokodile hauls the local freight past the town.

Photo: M. Bayly.

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