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Modelling Swiss Railways; Buildings

by Peter Marriott. Photos by author.

Modellers working in the popular scales of the Swiss scene are fortunate in respect of the extensive range of kit built buildings already available. Some may question that statement because they consider it would be preferable if manufacturers retailed an even larger range but consider;

In the UK the majority of modellers tend to reproduce parts of the British network and this causes too many of the same kit built structures to appear on layouts which feature in magazines and at exhibitions. In contrast there are relatively few modellers basing their handiwork on Swiss lines so we may use kit built structures with little fear that the adjacent layout will also display an identical building! The use of proprietary kits will certainly not be apparent to the casual onlooker because the majority of exhibition visitors do not know what overseas manufacturers produce.

Plastic kits are manufactured by Vollmer, Kibri, Faller, Pola etc and it is always worth acquiring a few of the catalogues to become acquainted with the variety retailed. As readers of this journal will know these include station buildings, chalets, town houses, industrial premises etc.

Above: One of the many HO kits of chalets available - this one is a Kibri kit.

Beatties and Humbrol, to name just two, now supply polystyrene cement in bottles with narrow metal tips which, in my experience, makes the application of adhesive more direct and less messy. A word of warning however - never leave the bottle lying on its side because the glue may leak or dry in the metal tip.

Plastic kits which are built straight from the box do not make the most realistic model. It is always worthwhile painting the various parts before construction. Use of acrylics or enamels removes that plastic appearance. Painting the roofs and timber walls improves the overall impression of the building tremendously and increases the individuality of the finished product. Whilst plastic timber is usually produced in a light brown colour on the prototype this colour is normally only seen on recently built houses and chalets. With age the timber darkens. Model buildings with timber in a darker shade seem to me to look a lot better but there again that is just personal choice. Your favourite shade of colour



Above: The real Oberreid Station and numerous chalets in the background. Kibri retail an HO model of this station building which would look good with Bemo's HOm models for the Brünig line.

will probably depend upon your area modelled.

The Fides wooden kits expands the range of structures still further. Their timber construction makes a nice change from plastic and again painting (water colours, acrylics or stain on the timber pieces) is required for the best results. The range includes models for Z, O, HO, and N gauges. The prices are reasonable (for example £10.25 for an N gauge kit of Blausee Mitzholz station) and detail castings, signs, glazing etc are included. In the most popular HO gauge station buildings are available include Celerina, Rueun and Saanenmoser. Some of the kits are pre-cut with others showing the outline printed onto wood leaving the builder to make the final cuts. I find these kits fun to build, a little more challenging than the usual plastic models and the final result strong and rewarding. Further details can be supplied by the Swiss Express advertiser Great Little Trains of Kenilworth.

Window boxes are essential to most Swiss chalets but do not think you have to make the boxes and then add the flowers. A dab of white PVA woodworking glue at the base of the window and a mixture of added flowers (i.e. finely chopped up foam in different colours) is all

that is required - the lack of an actual box will not even be noticeable!

Ferro Suisse offer both kit built structures and ready made products. These include the station at Ardez, a Trafohouse, weighbridge, girder-bridge and cement silo. Some of these kits are expensive.

For the scratchbuilder Wills plastic sheets are retailed as OO/HO but in the interests of scale it would perhaps be preferable to acquire sheets of the European (plastic and timber) sheets by various manufacturers. Again catalogues need to be consulted. Often there are spare parts left over from kits which can be used for modification or kit bashing purposes.

If room is not available for a layout why not reproduce a little of Switzerland in Bristol or New York - build a Vollmer kit of Därligen to rekindle BLS memories, Kibri's Oberried kit of the Brünig line station or Pola's G scale model of Susch.

Good building?

Peter Marriott