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The future. Well the rolling stock is a mixture of FO, RhB and BVZ, and the only RhB locos are electrodiesels from the Bernina Line so we have a challenge again. A first effort at a Ge 4/4^I of the first series is almost recognisable but is rather overshadowed by the excellent Alpinline HGe 4/4^{II} of the FO, of which I have purchased two examples.

Sadly the range is out of production again, having been deleted recently by Roco, its fourth owner in 16 years. I do hope that a small concern will take up the challenge; the potential is great even though the market may be somewhat limited.

The layout itself is the ongoing project that my layouts have always been. As an example, the current supply available to the motors was increased by the introduction of 1.5 amp controllers early in 1999. Subsequently problems were experienced with the spiking effect of small amounts of alternating current produced at low speeds, ruining the excellent low speed qualities and, indeed, burning out two motors. My co-conspirator, Steve, set to work with the support of e-mail contacts in the Gauge 'O' Guild and now we have two pure DC current con-

trollers, working off a single 1.5 amp transformer with twin windings. Just one example of the co-operation between differing branches of the hobby.

A short note about Steve. When I first came back to Lincolnshire, Steve had been a founder member of the Mablethorpe Club. Subsequently we have become the only members left and despite being severely disabled, Steve has been a real pal throughout the ups and downs of my life. He has an old van which we use for exhibitions and he is a wizard with scenery and with the electrical mysteries of 12 volts dc. I pay tribute to the man because he sticks with me through thick and thin and I hope that one day he will achieve his dream to model in 'O' gauge. In the meantime he perseveres with an EM gauge layout which we shall take back to Southend this Autumn.

So the future remains full of dreams; another layout is forming in my mind, perhaps a "townscape" of central Graubünden or possibly the Bernina line where some of my 'RhB' stock truly belongs. Either way the possibilities are endless.

(A note from Winco about Alpinline is on page 55)

David & Judith Riches

History:

Built as part of the original main line this steeply graded and twisting section was soon by-passed leaving Alpenhof as a quieter backwater with its branches to Rätsel and Helm. Its connections to the main line route have been maintained and the Alpenhof line can be very busy when engineering work takes place on the 'new' section of the main line. Strangely this coincides with exhibition days! The layout is modelled as for 1st of August 1988 (National Day).

Reality:

After helping to operate a British outline N gauge layout at exhibitions Judith decided she would like a model of her own. Switzerland and its railways being one of our joint interests it was the natural choice for the model. During the early planning stages of Alpenhof the idea arose that our Swiss and a friend's planned German layouts could be joined for through running, but the German layout never got off the paper. However, eventually we have built two new base boards which form the branch to Helm.

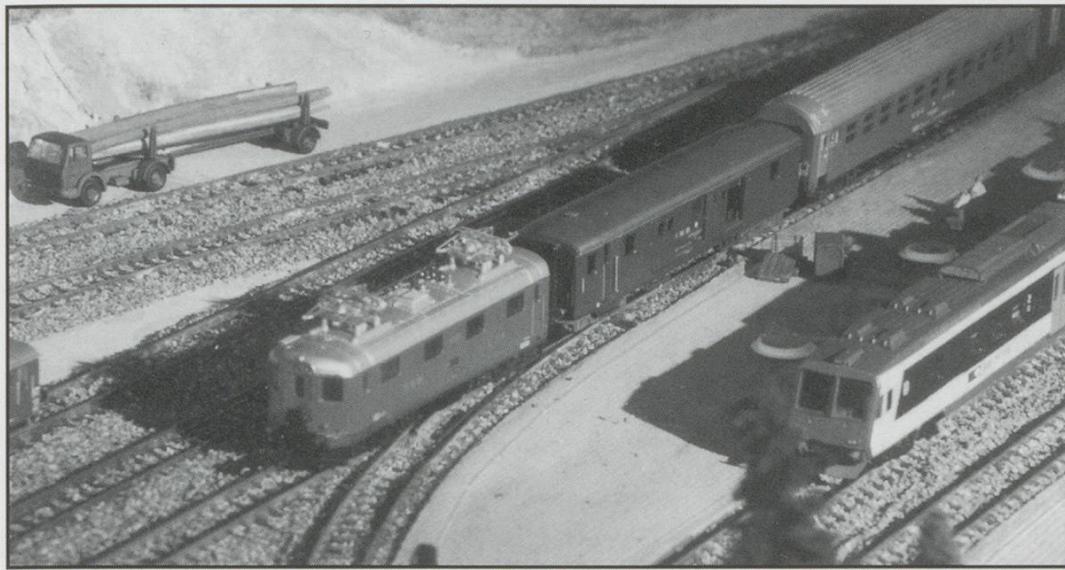
Space limitations at home meant that only a

ALPENHOF Switzerland in a small space

small layout was feasible and the 7' by 3' size is easily supported on a paste table with the new extension using a second table. The track plan for Alpenhof was soon arrived at from the criteria required by Judith and base board construction started using the traditional 2 x 1 inch timbers with chipboard tops.

Next to be tackled was the scenic side. The contours were built up with polystyrene tiles and semi-smoothed to requirements. This was then covered with plasterer's scrim and liberally coated with internal filler (i.e. white) as a light grey colour is easily achieved with the addition of small amounts of black and yellow poster paint. The retaining walls and abutments are inscribed filler suitably painted with powder paints. The snow shelter is made from hardboard, rough side out, and lightly washed with the same mixture as the plaster. For grassy areas the filler was given a wash of green powder paint of various hues and then half'n'half PVA (not forgetting the drop of washing-up liquid) spread over the area. A base of light green flock was applied and darker colours added with sponge flock for texture.

Bushes and trees made from garden cuttings and



lichen coated with flock were then added as required along with lots of conifer trees. These are mainly Heki products which have been sprayed with glue and then given a coating of flock.

Tunnel mouths are Peco on the branch lines - including a stretched version - and Pola on the main line. A selection of building kits has been made up and painted and weathered as required.

Track:

After carefully drawing the track plan onto the base boards (and after a minor redesign to allow for the German connection) the Peco Flexi track and points were fixed in place using 'Thixofix' glue. This allows the track to be aligned easily and dries fairly quickly. What is more the track is still salvageable without damage for further usage after cleaning.

Electrically the layout is relatively simple with cab control via two Gaugemaster controllers. This is just as well as soon after track laying had commenced an invite was received from a member of the German

Railway Society to attend a 'get together' with the emergent Alpenhof. Wiring was still in progress the day before the event!

Stock:

The locomotive stock includes four types of Re4/4s, some Ae6/6s for the mainline services with an Em3/3 for use in the goods area.

The branches are usually served by railcars and occasionally a Crocodile can be seen on goods traffic. The layout has a varied stock of wagons and coaches, reflecting the fact that Alpenhof sees international through traffic. Stock represents the variety of types and liveries seen on SBB metals in the late 1980's, and is ever-increasing, especially as we are fans of the Hupac concept.

Conclusion:

We have enjoyed ourselves in building the layout, although there are times when we wonder why we do it! This is usually during setting up at an exhibition when things always seem to go wrong. Over the years the layout has been well received by modellers and the public alike and we hope that they all enjoy the extension to Helm just as much.

Upper: An SBB Re4/4 collects passengers from the NPZ from Rätsel. Lower: An SBB Re4/4 passes a Tm in the early morning sunshine.

Both photos by the authors.

