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"I DID IT MY WAY"

– Part 1

Roger Ellis takes us through how he set out to construct a new layout.

ALL PHOTOS: *Roger Ellis*

At a recent Committee meeting our Editor noted that he would like to run more modelling articles in the magazine in addition to those provided by Peter Marriott and others so I thought I would assist. The request was timely as I had decided that my present layout "Hohtenn" had run its useful course. It has been a success judging by the nice comments received from both SRS members and the general public who seem to like seeing frequent full length trains running over that famous BLS bridge. However I may have to institute a stay of execution as I have volunteered to bring "Hohtenn" to Derby in March 2009 and Nick Freezer wants it for Alexandra Palace in 2010! Not withstanding



I have started to build a new end to end layout similar to "Lilikon" which will give Ian, your Chairman, and Dave Howsam the opportunity to have hours of operating fun.

This is the first in a short series but as the title suggests this is only how I make my layouts and I would only expect those



interested to glean one or two useful ideas from them. Sorry about the mixed use of both "imperial" and "metric" measurements but that is how some of my generation see things, which must say something about me.

Baseboard Construction

I read many accounts in the modelling press which advise using either plywood, chipboard or Sundela which are all fine in their way, but I think too heavy, especially if the layout is to be portable. I use "12mm ivory faced insulation board", the only qualification being that this material is light and therefore needs to be supported by wooden battens every 1ft or so. It is flexible and can be cut with ease, indeed I built a spiral for my HOM layout in one afternoon using an electric jigsaw with a fine blade. Not all builders merchants stock the board but Jewsons do - or rather if their nearest Branch does not then their computer system will tell your where it can be obtained. I do not have shares in that company but I have always found the staff to be helpful and they will offer to cut the board for you if it is too big to transport in one piece. The cost is roughly £13-14 for an 8' x 4' sheet.

I use 2 x 1 inch wood to strengthen the baseboards round the edge with 1x1 inch to

provide support in the middle. The baseboards are supported by a combination of trestles and legs (the latter fixed by hinges to the boards themselves) and are joined by the usual bolt and wing nut. The lining up of the boards is assisted by the use of wooden dowels. I find this simplifies the setting up of the layout.

Laying the track

I lay the track on cork tiles obtained from the usual DIY store fixed to the baseboards by wood glue after cutting to represent the chamfered edge of the ballast. If you are not going "digital" then before the track is secured you will need to work out where the feed and common return wires should be attached to the track. I solder my wires to the underside of the metal fish plates, which when the ballast is in place disguises their location. On the new layout I have separated both lines with insulated fishplates rather than let the "common return" be live throughout the whole layout. On "Lilikon" we had many instances of at least two locomotives wanting to move at the same time, which I suppose could have been due to my faulty wiring.

Now to the subject of ballasting and, if you have not fallen asleep dear reader, this is where I depart from the norm! I have obtained the world's supply of Humbrol "Extramite" which is a powder glue with the consistency of flour. I mix this with my Woodland Scenics ballast



with one part glue to six parts ballast, brush the mixture into the track, being careful to avoid the moving parts of the points and then spray the whole lot with water and the job is done. All you need to do is to leave overnight, vacuum to remove any excess and clean the track to get rid of the water stains. I have read so many complicated methods of ballasting track but this method really is simple.

The next article will cover wiring the layout - and how to remove solder from the hair!

