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Detail showing the catenary on the Alpmitholz layout that Peter showed at the AGM. PHOTO: Peter Marriott

FAQs AT SWISS AGM 2010

Peter Marriott summarises the most frequently asked modelling questions about his layout at this year's AGM

What size is this layout?

The Alpmitholz HO scale layout measures 1.32 m x 1.22 m on two baseboards. It is intended to represent somewhere in "BLS country". The purpose of the layout is to be able to just stand and watch the trains go by in an attractive setting to remind onlookers of holidays in the Alps. It is basically a circle of Peco Code 100 Radius 4 Setrack with a couple of hidden sidings. A Gaugemaster Advance Prodigy 2 is used for DCC operation.

Is this catenary easy to install?

I used the Viessmann catenary system though the masts are not strictly correct for Swiss practice. The Viessmann system is one of the simplest systems to install because it requires no soldering and one can simply clip the pieces in place. Viessmann produce lengths of wire ranging from 140mm to 400 mm in HO scale. In addition they produce a range of wires for specific track components for various European track systems.

Is it difficult to fit a DCC decoder into a locomotive?

Learning about DCC does not take place overnight but it really does not take too long to become DCC proficient. Initially it's best to learn DCC basics such as installing the system, operating trains, turning on and off the lights and working the sound effects. Fitting a decoder in a modern locomotive might take less than 5 minutes, though I confess to being nervous the first time and it took a bit longer! In the simplest of terms it involves removing the body shell, removing the blanking plate and fitting in the correct decoder. The bodyshell is then replaced and away you go.

There are a lot of trees on this layout, who made them?

The layout has over 100 trees of both deciduous and coniferous types. They came from a variety of companies including: Anita Décor, Bachmann Scene Scapes, Busch (the trees with the fir cones), Faller, Gaugemaster, Heki, Hornby, Noch, The Model Tree Shop and Woodland Scenics. A few folks at the AGM commented on the Scots Pines. I have a stand of three of these - two by 4D ModelShop and one by The Model Tree Shop.