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SWISS EXPRESS SCENERY CLINIC

Peter Marriott continues his series exploring the challenges for those modelling the landscape for Swiss alpine layouts.

A Piko SBB Cargo Am 843 standing on top of a 2 inch raised track bed with painted and weathered Heki retaining wall.
PHOTOS: Peter Marriott

Raising the track bed above the baseboard

Last time we covered the baseboard and the foundations of an Alpine based layout. Now is time to consider raising the track above the level of the baseboard, because rarely do the trains in Switzerland run on wide flat valley floors! There are various methods of raising the track above a level baseboard. These include:

- Dropping certain sections of the baseboard level so as to create a valley. The higher track bed can then run on a bridge, viaduct or embankment. See the accompanying photographs for an example of this.
- Using a plywood base for the raised track bed sitting on timber blocks. We saw this in the last issue of *Swiss Express* in pictures 3, 4 and 5 on P25.
- Using the Woodland Scenics Sub Terrain range of hard foam pieces to introduce inclines and a raised track bed which we also illustrate here.
- Using open baseboard construction to accommodate changes in the land by the use of shaped contour formers.

Using a dropped baseboard this river gorge scene was made. The bridge is a Kibri plastic kit.

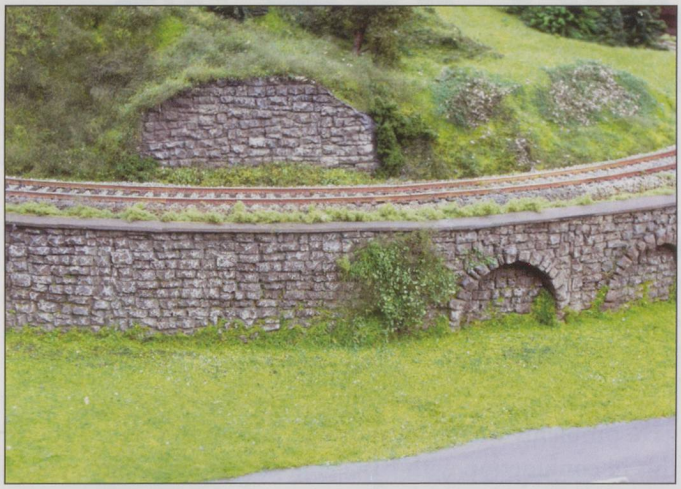
A lot of plaster cloth was used to make the sides of the river gorge. The rocky outcrops are hard foam pieces by Noch that come ready painted. They are light in weight and are therefore ideal for portable layouts.

Lots of greenery in the river gorge. It mainly consists of Woodland Scenics Poly Fibre which has been teased out and fixed to the plaster cloth that was painted green with acrylic paint.

Raising the track and making track inclines using Woodland Scenics Sub Terrain

To raise the height of the track over the baseboard level (for example to run the line on an embankment) I have used Woodland Scenics riser pieces on several of my layouts. These are flexible pieces of hard foam sold in heights of 1", 2", & 4". This system has various component parts including a number of different shaped hard foam (polystyrene) pieces, that work in conjunction with each other to form landscape formers, raised support for the track, pre-cut track inclines with 2%, 3% or 4% gradients and a whole range of accessories and tools to make the job both fun and quick. All these components are light in weight and can be used in any way to suit your layout size and location. Being light in weight they are ideal for use on a portable layout. Where you want inclines on your layout the Sub Terrain system accommodates this in two stages – a starter piece and a second stage piece. For example, to raise a track 2" from the baseboard level it will be necessary to use two incline pieces, the first will raise the track from the baseboard level to 1" and the second will raise the track from 1" to 2" high. All of these pieces can be fixed to each other and the baseboard using Woodland Scenics Foam Tack Glue. I have also successfully used PVA glue for this purpose, but it takes longer to dry. Whilst the glue sets you can hold the foam pieces down with Woodland Scenics special 'T' pins. The company also sells a special knife to cut the hard foam.The only problem with using these foam pieces with a European layout is that if you are using catenary there is nothing stable to fix the masts to. That said on some small layouts I have found that by pushing holes into the foam section then pouring PVA glue into the hole before pushing home the mast a stable catenary system was possible using either Sommerfeldt or Viessmann masts and wires.

Woodland Scenics Sub Terrain hard foam flexible riser section has been used here to raise the level of the track bed above the flay baseboard. The retaining wall is by Noch.



The finished section of landscape showing how the entire scene is made from hard foam pieces, both the Woodland Scenics track bed riser and the Noch retaining walls which are also flexible to follow the track bed.

Filling the space between the land contours

Once the contour formers have been shaped and fixed to the baseboards, thought needs to be given as to how to fill in the space between the land contours. A large number of alternative methods are available to us:

- Busch produce a dedicated landscape system that

incorporates heavy-duty crepe paper. Crepe paper is also available from Noch or an art shop. This can be fixed to the formers with a staple gun or hot glue.

- Chicken wire is one of the traditional methods being spread between, and then fixed to, the top of the timber contour formers.
- Noch produce landscape foundation parts called the Terra - Form System which uses timber dowel posts and fixing plugs to produce a lightweight basis for the hills, embankments or similar.
- Polystyrene hard foam pieces (similar to that used in house insulation) can be carved with a sharp knife to fill the landscape.
- A light metal mesh used for car bodywork repairs can be bought from Halfords, or similar stores. Busch, Noch, or other firms, sell a similar model railway product but this is often more expensive. The mesh will usually require a timber frame to attach it to.
- A web of strips of corrugated card or masking tape fixed to timber formers and to each other using hot glue or a staple gun. The closer together the tape the stronger the web will be to take plaster impregnated cloth or similar.
- Crumpled newspaper or parcel packing pushed between the contour formers and then covered with plaster impregnated cloth. Plaster impregnated cloth is deservedly popular with scenery builders. It is available at many model shops under the name of Mod-Roc, Peco Landform, Woodland Scenics Plaster Cloth and sold by many firms including Gaugemaster, Geoscenics, Heki, The Model Landscape Co, Noch, etc. It needs to be cut into manageable pieces. Once wet it can be laid over crumpled newspaper or any of the other suggested materials above and smoothed down with the fingers. One or two layers are sufficient to give a good basis for the landscape.

To learn more

I can do no better than to mention a superb model railway in HO scale that is being built of Blausee Mitholz. Go to www.mschroeder.info where some of the pages have an English translation showing stage-by-stage construction of the layout and its landscape. It is well worth a look for inspiration. The Scenery Manual by Woodland Scenics available from their dealers is a useful book that covers layout basics, terrain, water effects and making the landscape. See **www.bachmann.co.uk** or **www.woodlandscenics.com** for more information. An excellent magazine special with information for making alpine layouts is Eisenbahn Journal's Abenteuer Alpenbahn. The 92-page publication from 2007 contains a large number of splendid photographs of alpine layouts that make me want to start a new layout every time that I open its pages! Go to **www.eisenbahn-journal.de/art/680702.html** for more information.

Next time we will cover the making of rock faces - an important aspect of any Swiss layout!

Editor's note; This article is based in part on one by Peter Marriott that originally appeared in *Model Rail International* magazine.

RVT ABm 2/5

A model by Piers Milne

On P11 of the June edition of Swiss Express there was a photograph of Régional du Val de Travers (RVT) ABm 2/5 No.9, a strange and very ancient railcar that now resides in the Verkehrshaus at Luzern. I have completed an 'N-gauge' model of this very early railcar which was an attempt by Sulzer (which in 1902 had bought a patent from Rudolf Diesel), to use his engines to power railway vehicles. The use of direct current from a diesel-electric power supply gave problems when starting with a load, but Sulzer solved this in conjunction with BBC. The six cylinder engine drove a generator that supplied the current for the electric traction motors in the bogie at the other end of the unit, a better system than mechanical traction through a gearbox. Five examples of the design, which seated 57 and was an early example of one-man-operation, were supplied to the Prussian and Saxon Railways just before WW1 began; however they proved unsatisfactory in service and were disposed of. In 1924 the RVT purchased two examples and the one now in the museum stayed in service with them until 1965.

My model of this vehicle was started by another person who sold it unfinished to a dealer, from whom I bought and completed it. It was derived from a Rivarossi Bavarian R3 0-6-0 Tank locomotive with plasticard bodywork added over the original boiler, with laddering and lights added. This has been harnessed to a chopped down Arnold KPEV T2 coach. The two parts are extremely close-coupled with a pin in the coach end dropping into a hole at the back of the (open) cab, thus allowing a little swivelling facility, since (with a fixed assembly) it would be impossible for the model to negotiate even the slightest curve. The Rivarossi R3 models never ran very well, so this is still not the smoothest of mechanisms.