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Autor: Marriott, Peter
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BUILDINGS FOR SWISS LAYOUTS

Peter Marriott discusses the huge variety of buildings now available for modellers



An Emmentaler farmhouse (a plastic kit by Kibri) with a handmade garden along side. All photos: Peter Marriott

It is now possible to buy many types of buildings and accessories in kit or ready assembled form in most of the popular scales including HO and N scales.

PLASTIC KITS

This is the traditional way of making models of buildings and houses and if the kit is nicely made and well painted they can still be a good way to provide the buildings for your layout. There are a huge number of kits available from Busch, Faller, Noch and Vollmer amongst others. If you have not built a plastic kit before the first suggestion is to build something small rather than attempting to make a complicated kit. Do not try to skip reading the instructions of a kit even if it is a simple one. You could regret it if you do not! Some parts do have just one right way of being assembled and if you get that wrong you may not be able to finish making the kit. On some kits there are part numbers on the plastic sprue that links the different pieces. Look at these and compare them with the drawings in the instructions so as to become familiar with the kit.

Before assembly it is worth looking at the parts that you think need painting whilst they are still on the sprue. Some parts are best left unpainted until after assembly. Many modellers now use acrylic paints because they can easily be obtained from art shops, W H Smiths and Hobbycraft. They are water based. Once the paint has dried assembly can begin. Carefully cut each of the pieces off the sprue with a sharp craft knife. Cut as close to the part as you can and use wet and dry paper to rub down any rough edges on the part. There are a large number of plastic adhesives on the market. Visit www.hobbycraft.co.uk and www.deluxematerials.co.uk

to see the selection of adhesives that are available. It is worth buying several types of plastic cement/liquid to decide which suits your modelling style the best.

LASER CUT BUILDINGS

The Fides range of building kits uses a mixture of laser cut timber and card components. Other companies that make laser cut kits include Busch, Faller and Noch. In addition white metal accessories are included in some kits together with plastic glazing sheets. Each kit has full assembly diagrams plus several building tips in English in its accompanying leaflet. The component parts of these kits include laser cut timber, card, photo card, metal and other accessories. These kits do require a range of skills that involve a variety of adhesives, primer and setting times.

RESIN BUILDINGS

Ready assembled buildings made from poly resin are a great way to make a village or station quickly. These buildings do not require painting or assembly and are available from an increasing number of companies including Hornby International and Liliput. Bachmann's Scenecraft range in both N and HO/OO includes a modern diesel depot and a cement works for example, that would look equally at home on a Swiss layout. The buildings can be used straight out of the box or can be personalised in small ways such as adding an extension onto them, weathering the building, adding lights to the interior and attaching creeping ivy to the walls.

TOP TIPS


● Curtains or blinds can be made from scraps of different coloured paper, thin card or tissue. PVA adhesive or sellotape can be used to fix the curtains in place inside the building.

● Windows can be made to look dirty by scrubbing them with sandpaper or painting them with thinned watercolours.

● Cutting the windows with a sharp craft knife or a screwdriver can give the appearance of broken window panes.

● One way of personalising industrial, office or station buildings is to fix signs and posters to them. Various companies sell miniature signs and posters in popular scales. Or why not make your own signs using a digital camera and a printer?

● The visual impact of a nicely finished building can be spoilt if there is a small gap running along the lower edge of the building. One of the most important finishing touches that we can do to buildings is to "plant" them into the ground rather than on top of the ground. PVA adhesive can be used to fix the buildings to the layout and as the glue is drying around the base of the building it is easy to sprinkle on a very fine scatter material such as Treemendus real earth or Woodland Scenics Fine Turf. The scatter material sticks to the drying PVA and hides the join.

● Use Hornby's Skale Lighting system to add interior lights to a building. These lighting parts are suitable for most sizes of building from Z scale through to O scale. 



A laser-cut house and outside toilet from Noch. The addition of window boxes makes the house look "more Swiss".



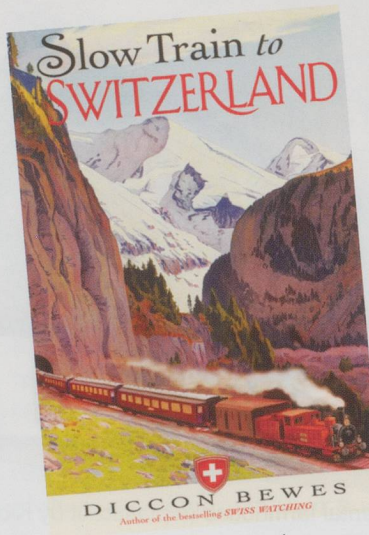
This Faller kit of a sports shop has been fitted with window display detail including a model modelling sportswear.



A Kibri plastic kit of the SBB Maienfeld station near Sargans awaiting its signage.

Slow Train to Switzerland

Author: Diccon Bewes. Published by Nicholas Brearley Publishing, 3-5 Spafield Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1R 4QB. Hardback, 300 pages. 9" x 6". Over 70 vintage b&w photos. £18.99. ISBN 978-1-85788-609-2 Available from all good book shops – use them or lose them!



This year sees the 150th anniversary of Thomas Cook's first organised tour to Switzerland (see Michael Farr's article elsewhere in this issue). Two years ago, author Diccon Bewes and his mother, accompanied by, as he puts it, three long dead others – Thomas Cook, John Murray (an early guide book publisher) and Miss Jemima (who

was on the original tour and whose diary sparked off the modern day event) - set off to travel the original route by as near as possible the original means of transport. However donkey rides or walking over some of the passes may have been updated if more suitable modes of transport are now available. The 1863 party started off as 130 souls, but once the Alps were reached only 4 ladies and 3 gents were left – the "Junior United Alpine Club" as they labelled themselves. Starting on the ferry from Newhaven, Diccon retraced the route to Paris and then on to Geneva before visiting many of the current favourite alpine locations. In his typical slightly humorous prose, the author describes the difference in travel between then and now, slipping the odd quote direct from Miss Jemima's diary. He starts the tour in Switzerland by giving a description of life there in the 19th century, again using quotes from English visitors at the time. There are also quotes and tips from John Murray's 1861 guide book to set the scene for the travel still to come. As Diccon says "That first Cook's Tour was noticeable for its pre-dawn starts, 18-hour days and the place-a-day itinerary." As the journey progresses around the country, each phase is accompanied by quotes from the original journal and other period publications, and explains the conditions prevailing at that time, conditions that were very different from those we are all familiar with today. For instance, how many of us know that the mountain folk of Valais suffered badly from goitres and being cretins simply because of a lack of iodine in their diet? This book gives an excellent history of our favourite country, not the usual "battle of this or war of that", but at the much more personal level of the common people's everyday lives. The 1860s were