

May 2020

Well I nearly made it to an April issue but it looks like I've missed that by a few days. I hope everyone out there is keeping well and avoiding the worst ravages of Covid-19. I really miss going out to shows, meeting people and talking trains, but Alan Cross keeps me supplied with some humorous takes on the current crisis which keep spirits up. I also miss being able to just pop to a local(ish) shop when I need something in a hurry; mail order can be slow and expensive. Still, one day this will all be a bad memory and things will get back to 'normal' whatever that may look like.

I haven't had much input since my last effort so this is mainly going to be about the progress, or lack thereof, on my own layout, now named Eliasville after my grandson.

But first a note from Chris White

Hogs Hill (Loco servicing facility).

Good progress is being made on my micro layout now named Hogs Hill (Loco servicing facility).



Photo: Chris White

Kato track now pinned down and Kato point motors connected and wired up, all very straight forward to do, but fiddly to feed through the back. I also fitted the connecting wire from AC/DC converter to the socket for the Digitrax controller, which saves me feeding the wire through to connect up.

Once all wired up a full test was carried out, so all plugged in and the controller burst into life, so put on a loco, entered its code and selected but when I tried to move the loco, nothing moved and no sound, so went back through the wiring and found no problem.

Then I noticed that the track status light was not on, then the penny dropped; I had not pressed the power button, and guess what everything burst into life, and the test was successful. I had put power to all tracks so if points were switched the locos could carry on grumbling away.

My next job was to hide away the lead off to the fiddle yard and an overhead panel, then came the backscene. I used a Peco one showing the lower Axe valley but I took away the river section.



Photo: Chris White

I have now done the hard area around the light service shed using foam board as the base and will cover with plasticard. I have done the shed and some of the storage tanks, the truss girder bridge, and will make a start on Russ's Lines East Tower kit, which will take a little time to do.



Photo: Chris White

I also did up the fiddle yard section with cork base, a shelf with light and small boxes to hold tools, and the vehicles which will fit on, and the hand held controller pocket.



Photo: Chris White

My next job after the switch tower will be the ballasting, and painting track work.

Chris White

Thanks, Chris, for this update and it's nice to see progress on this 'micro' layout (and a new use for a wheelie bin!)

Eliasville (an exercise in adaptation)

I first pictured work on Eliasville in the last newsletter but now the first board, the town site, is really taking shape. I'm using Grainge and Hodder 1200mm x 400mm boards for this layout, which, I hope, will end up as a semi-permanent continuous run in a spare bedroom, space, time and finance permitting!

I've called this an exercise in adaptation as I wanted to use an existing diorama (Bellevue) as the basis of the town. This had been constructed on a 2ft x 1ft x 1ins sheet of Woodland Scenic foam. A large part of this has been used but chunks were carved off using a hot wire cutter and some were repositioned before the bits were placed, loosely, on the plywood board and finally stuck down.

More small dioramas had been constructed previously with individual structures which I wanted to use so out came the cutter again. I had also decided that the railroad would run at a lower level than the main town road. That was going to cause a small problem later!



Soon, more foam was being carved up, individual structures I'd built were being dragged out of storage and positioned

along Main Street and track was being loose-laid ready for ballasting.

Then I made a decision which has influenced a lot of the subsequent activity. Lights; I wanted lights in the town. I made the decision to use the Woodland Scenic Just-Plug system as it seemed to offer a lot of simplification in wiring (no soldering) and also the right style of street lights for this setting.



Now, six weeks into 'lockdown' and most of the buildings have lights inside and some outside; a neat row of street lamps runs along Main Street and even the Depot platform light (a dummy on the Woodland Scenic depot I was using) has been replaced by a working lamp.



One huge advantage of the Woodland Scenic system is that it only requires one power feed into a distribution hub and then individual hubs, connected to the central hub, provide power to individual buildings or groups of street

lights. Each hub outlet has a dimmer control which allows you to set the level of brightness for each light. All the lights are LEDs so power demand and heat generation are minimised, though the underside of the layout does look a bit like a spider's nightmare!

I've also added a couple of 'special effects' lights from Train-Tech and Noch. One of the buildings now houses a disco with flashing multicolour lights, the foundry by the lines has a 'fire effect' for the forges and the cinema has a string of lights round the canopy. All these are compatible with the Woodland Scenic power supply so no problem there.



I've started adding trees, foliage, grass, etc. raiding my accumulation of Model Tree Shop, Woodland Scenic and other products to provide, or at least try and provide, an Autumnal 'Fall' look to the scene but there's still a long way to go.



One problem I mentioned earlier arose from the street being at a higher level than the railroad but without space for a ramped roadway. So... vehicle access is from another road, off the board on the railroad side of the board over a grade crossing and access from Main Street is requiring the construction of a stairway leading down the rock face; with railings of course (health and safety).

In the last issue I described a problem I had with the layout wiring. Well, after a lot of thinking, reading and chin scratching, I came to the conclusion I'd got it all wrong and would need to start again. Thank goodness I hadn't ballasted yet! Next time I'll think more about what I'm doing!

There's still an awful lot of work to finish on this board before I move onto the next one; lots of details to add, people, vehicles, the staircase to finish, fencing to add along the 'cliff' edge, rocks to cast and incorporate, the list is almost endless and of course, to sort out that pesky track wiring. But I'm really having fun doing all this.

The next board will bolt on to the firehouse end of this one but will only have a single track running its whole length. The rest will be taken up by a slightly mountainous (hilly) leisure and recreation district with a hotel, camp ground and roadside eating / shopping provision. Where next – only time will tell.

I've learnt some valuable lessons from what I've done so far. One of the main ones is plan ahead and don't rush things. If I'd thought what I was going to do a few years ago I'd have incorporated interiors, or at least window dressings, into more of the

buildings so illumination was more effective. I probably wouldn't have used one-inch thick foam as a diorama base as it's still causing problems and I'd remember that sometimes less is more!

A Tale of a Diner

Many years ago, at a Torbay convention (remember them), Marshall Thompson of Republic Locomotive Works came over from the USA with a trade stand. One item I purchased from him was a kit for a 'stainless-steel' roadside diner. I started construction as soon as I got home, then, for some reason, I stalled and put the part-built kit in a box with other debris.

Recently, while I was turning out the shed, I found the box with the part-built diner and the remaining parts. What else could I do but complete the model?

It's probably not my finest effort but the little building is full of character and I'm sure will find a place somewhere on the new layout. Construction was a mixture of laser cut wood, clear plastic sheet and plastic strip for the ribbing, oh and sand to dress the roof! All the signage was provided on a sheet of glossy paper. Looking back this was perhaps a bit adventurous for a first kit-built structure because of the complex mix of materials but in the end I'm happy with the result.





Not the greatest pictures I'm afraid but enough to show off this little survivor.

New to You?

Not much to report this time round. There seems to be an endless stream of new locos coming out from Broadway Limited, all of the very highest quality but with price tags that reflect this quality.

One much smaller operation, but one that I think is worthy of more note is Showcase Miniatures

https://www.showcaseminatures.net/n_scale/

They've been around for some time and their range includes some nice structure kits, excellent quality cast white metal vehicle kits, loco kits and parts and for the really hardcore modeller parts for Nn3 locos. They're even thinking about a three-truck powered Nn3 Shay. There's a YouTube video of the prototype running as sweet as anything using a power unit developed by them. Very neat!

I think that's about all for now. Please send material so I can keep the newsletter going and until the next issue, keep safe.

Ralph