Editorial
The feature this month is kitbashing.
Please also note the preliminary announcement at the end of this newsletter of a Garden Railway Exhibition in George in December.
First though a point arising from the December NSC has to be raised. Gary Smith has highlighted the fact that we do not have to travel to Norway for a scenic journey.
Of course he is right. The Powervan trip up the Montagu Pass which leaves from the Outeniqua Transport Museum in George is almost Alpine in its drama. But the operation to which Gary was referring is the Wolsley to Ceres line over Mitchells Pass in the Western Cape. As Gary puts in his usual inimitable style:
“Why are we so excited about foreign stuff when we have our very own extreme mountain railroads right here in south Africa clinging precariously to shelves cut into mountain sides and hacking their way through ultra-deep cuttings in the rocks, some so undercut that when you stand on the edge of the cutting and look down, the line actually goes back in under the overhang of the cutting and you can only see the outside rail of the line when looking straight down”.
Neil Wetmore’s superb aerial view of the line can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6zAB_6Npdw.
Yes there is a railway line down there!

This is the first example of what is hoped will be many more reopened operations. Information on the line and its operations can be sourced at: http://www.ceresrail.co.za. A video can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Krtp4ZiJQa0

It is the fact that the railway is a combined freight (diesel hauled) and tourist (steam hauled) operation that gives hope that the reopened line
will endure. In fact recently it has been announced that it is planned to emulate the model on a number of other lines including one dear to my heart – the George Knysna line. Refer to The Friends of the Choo-Tjoe latest newsletter at http://fedrail.co.za/images/pdf/dec2017/Loop26.pdf.

**Kitbashing**

One of the hobby highlights in my life in the late eighties and nineties was reading articles on kitbashing by the late Art Curren in the Model Railroader magazine. ‘Kitmingling’ is probably a better description of the process involved. The object is to build styrene kits which are distinctive or as Art put it ‘altering the character of a mass produced kit to make it unique’. Of course there are alternative approaches to achieving the same result e.g. scratchbuilding or building craftsman kits like Fine Scale Miniatures but kitmingling can achieve a highly satisfactory result often at lower cost and with less effort.

Art Curren’s articles were consolidated into a book – ‘Kitbashing HO Model Railroad Structures’ published by Kalmbach in 1988, reprinted in 1994. As far as I am concerned this is the bible on the subject but sadly it is out of print. Fortunately second hand copies can be obtained via Amazon.

I do not have the artistic imagination to devise my own kitbashes so have been happy to use Art’s projects. The idea is that a basic kit or kits are merged or kitmingled, often by adding additional stories or increasing the size of the footprint. Of course the principles applied to HO kits can also be used in other scales e.g. N.

Perhaps a few words on the tools required for this exercise would be appropriate. These are basic and most modellers will possess them already. A craft knife, fine toothed razor saw, metal straight edge (scale rule can do double duty), small flat file, pair of tweezers, liquid plastic cement (I mostly use MEK) and paint brush to apply same and you are away.

Art Curren refers to one, perhaps unusual tool, for kitbashing – an office copier! As Art says:

“lay the pieces of the kit on the glass and run off a few copies. Paste these copies on some thin cardboard and cut out the walls. You can experiment with these and try out various arrangements, figuring out where the cuts will need to be made. It is better to make mistakes on the cardboard walls early with a pair of scissors than to make them later on the actual walls with a razor saw.”

The primary ‘raw material’ for Art’s kitbashes are Lifelike kits particularly the Hotel kit, AHM latterly Tyco, IHC, Heljan, Concor and Pola. Some of these structures e.g. the moulds for Pola’s Brewery kit have been around for 50 years in one form or another! For example Perry Shibbel Fruit & Produce Co-op had its roots in two F & M Schaefer Brewery kits.
So, 2x

To give an idea of the process involved, what follows is an excerpt from Art Curren’s book. This shows the cuts that have to be made to the walls so that you end up with the adjacent building. While I am responsible for the kitbashes the painting and signs were done by Alick Horne.
And how the ‘new’ walls go together with the unaltered ones.
Other examples done many years ago are: 2xTyco Freight Houses

As shown by the adjacent model the Tyco/Pola freight house kit is a versatile one for kitbashing. Other candidates for ‘redesign’ are the Superior Bakery and Weekly Herald kits (originally an engine house by Revell!) by AHM, Concor/Heljan, the Life-like Hotel kit (very versatile) and Design Preservation models and parts packs.
Same walls – different front and details
2xStorefront Apartment Building (Pola)

As with many of these kits they were produced or at least marketed by various manufacturers and in various forms over the years e.g. AHM’s Uncle Joe’s Barber Shop, later renamed the Storefront Apartment Building and produced by IHC. Model Power also marketed it as Burlington Mills. Finally the kit has been sold as Luigi’s Restaurant, Lastop Funeral Home, Firehouse, the same walls but with different details.

The unusual shape of this building appeals to me. It is designed to fit in the triangle formed where two tracks diverge from a no 4 turnout. This helps get away from the regular, rectangular shape that many layouts end up with. Another feature is the building adds a height dimension, appearing bigger/taller than it really is.
Overview/plan of wedge shaped factory

To get away from regularity/conformity take one storey off a Pola kit and add it to another..........
And finally a project started nearly 25 years ago and still unfinished a Concor court-house kit .........

This is quite a complicated conversion, some of the structural changes as well as the cosmetic ones being evident e.g. the addition of a third storey to the building, but some are not so visible. The changes to the shape required the base (footprint) and roof to be altered.

to........a Notsorun of the Mill

Still lots to do. Apart from fitting windows and doors, an extension has to be added on the left side of the building and also loading docks using pieces from a Tyco/Pola freight house kit and then my most unfavourite job – painting. An idea of what the completed project will look like is shown below. Art Curren obviously used pieces for the cupola from a different kit which I do not have.
**Garden Railway Exhibition**

In an endeavour to promote the larger scales and gauges of the hobby and raise the profile of the Outeniqua Transport Museum in George, the South African Large Scale Model Railway Group (SALSMRG) in conjunction with the Eden Lions and the Outeniqua Railway Society is planning a 5 day exhibition in the Museum premises in December. Two layouts will be available enabling Gauge 1/G scale and 16mm scale live steam and electrically powered (DC, DCC and battery) locos to be run on 45mm and 32mm track. Set up will be on Wednesday and Thursday 12th and 13th December with running from Friday to Tuesday the 14th to 18th. Note the 17th is a public holiday. Invitations will be extended to overseas delegates.

The Museum has a superb collection of locos, coaches and railway artifacts well worth a visit in its own right. In addition, the Outeniqua Railway Society’s HO SAR layout will be open for viewing. While the accent will be on showing off trains running, it is hoped suppliers of model railway equipment will use the opportunity to market their wares and participants to dispose of their surplus items. Further, this could be the opportunity to launch a large scale modular group in South Africa. For those unfamiliar with this part of the Western Cape, George is connected by air to the major cities in South Africa and the area is a magnet for the tourist. The Outeniqua Powervan which climbs the Montagu Pass leaves from the Museum. View at: https://www.gardenroute.com/george-outeniqua-power-van_content_op_view_id_44
Half an hour to the west at Mossel Bay is a Big Five game reserve, Diaz Museum and post office tree. An hour away is Oudtshoorn with ostrich farms, a cheetah/wildlife reserve and the Oudtshoorn Museum. Beyond Oudtshoorn are the world famous Cango Caves. Closer by, at Wilderness are beautiful beaches and the SAN Parks reserve at the mouth of the Touws river. You pass the iconic Kaaiman’s river bridge which was a favourite spot of railway photographers en route. Further up the coast there is the Goukamma reserve (canoeing on the river) the Knysna lagoon, inland of which is magnificent indigenous forest and the old gold mining workings at Millwood. At Plettenberg Bay there is an elephant park, Robberg reserve and beautiful beaches. Half an hour from Plett is Birds of Eden and Monkeyland. The wives will not be bored while you operate trains! Of course there is a downside to holding the event in December with stress on accommodation during holiday time but there are numerous campsites in the area as well as b&b’s. In addition December was the best common denominator to provide sufficient planning time and attract the maximum number of local and overseas visitors and so raise some money for charity. Please note firstly the event is still subject to final confirmation which will be announced by March at the latest and secondly that although we will do our best to keep visitors and delegates entertained this is an exhibition not a convention. Communication will be mostly via e-mail – Carel Janse van Rensburg who is bringing his 45mm gauge layout from Pretoria can be contacted at: carel@angohygiene.com. I will be bringing my 45mm/32mm portable layout from Durban. If you wish to contact me please use shares@iafrica.com or northstarrailway@gmail.com. In addition information will be loaded onto the website www.northstarrailway.com. We look forward to seeing you in December.