



THE NORTH STAR CHRONICLES – a newsletter for the model railway fraternity

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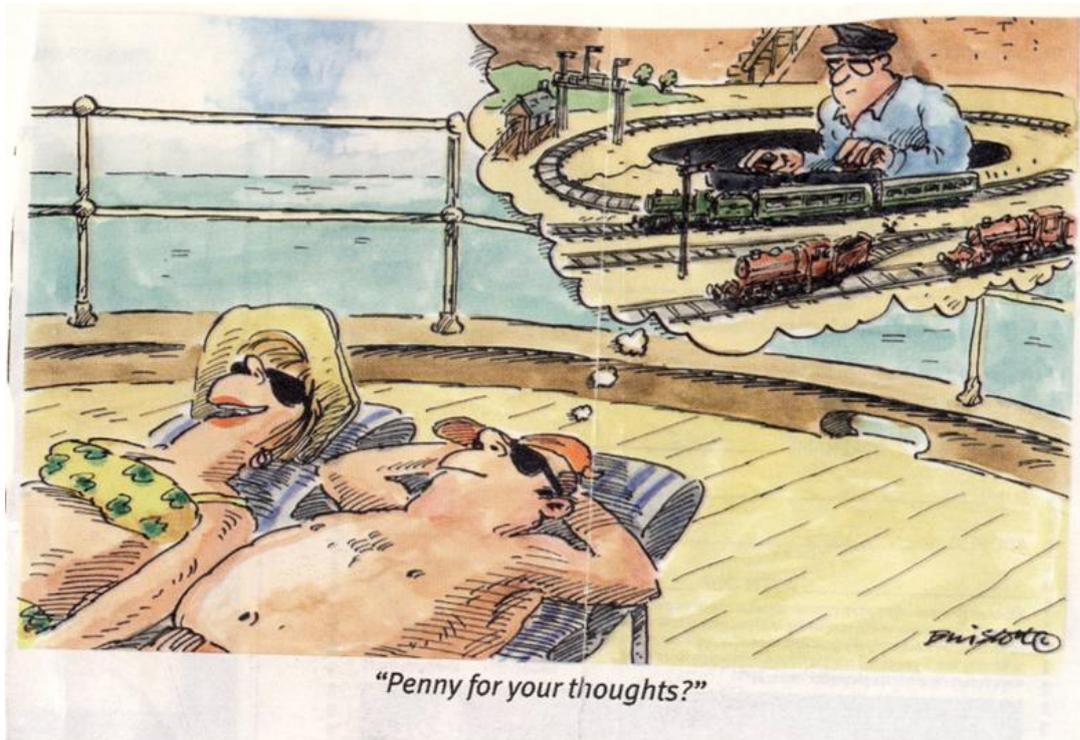
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Editorial

A happy New Year to all. And while you are enjoying your holiday remember the importance of your hobby in your life!



This month the main topic is painting, more specifically painting white metal models for reasons which will become clear. Hopefully someone

better qualified than me will write an article on painting plastic kits at some stage in the future. I'm sure this will be a topic to be covered in a clinic at the Model Railway Convention to be held in Durban and Pietermaritzburg next year.

But first there is a post script on DCC. I don't wish to flog the subject to death but a further comment received from Francois Kritzingler contains some useful and relevant information.

DCC

"Thanx for posting the responses to the DCC debate! Interesting to see such a positive response to DCC. I would have thought one or 2 negative responses at least also!

Further to my response, I did touch on to it, and one of the other respondents also commented. Various brand name DCC systems CAN actually be used together. As I mentioned, Roco and Lenz uses the same system

Digitrax uses Loconet, which has been adopted by numerous other manufacturers, as the communications protocol. The FRED I mentioned is produced by Uhlenbrock, but 100% Loconet compatible, as are a number of other manufacturer's devices.

Then, in the 3rd category, we get the multilingual systems. 2 notable devices springs to mind here. 1st is the Uhlenbrock IntelliBox II. It talks DCC and Marklin digital, is Loconet compatible as well as others. It is a marvelous piece of technology. And 2nd is the ESU ECoS 2, which takes it a step further. It speaks Marklin digital, CAN bus, and Loconet. It will also connect to Lenz/Roco type dcc boosters. With its loconet adapter, any loconet equipment can be connected. And the final trick up its sleeve is that it will accept the DCC output from ANY 'old' dcc system and mix it in with its own, and so you do not lose any of your investment in DCC you already have made.

However, I have to agree with what a few people mentioned, and that is cost. That is the single aspect I do believe DCC cannot compete with a simple DC system... even the most basic DCC system will set you back in excess of R2500-R3000, the high end systems I mentioned above, is far more expensive. But as I originally said, most average users will not ever need a high end system. But we suffer from the same problem, it is nice to have the 'bragging rights' because we have the all singing, all dancing system that we never use to its full potential".

Painting White Metal Models

From my friend Chris Webster in the UK:

“Ah yes, painting, my favourite bit of model making too! (Actually, painting I can usually cope with, it’s when I varnish things afterwards that it has a nasty habit of going pear shaped for me)

Two vehicles varnished last weekend. Same airbrush, same varnish, same thinners, same mix and same make of enamel paint underneath.

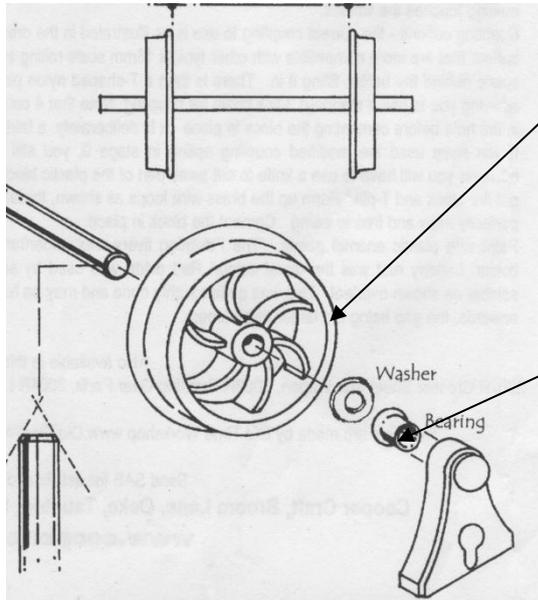
Atropos slate wagon – Dried with perfect matt finish - Excellent

Jurassic brake van – Dried with van body covered in big white blotchy patches and shiny areas on the roof – Argggghh!”

I know just how he feels. If there is one aspect of the hobby (and house maintenance!) which wherever possible I have avoided, it is painting. If I can paraphrase a comment by Tim Shackleton from his book “Weathering” part of the Hornby Magazine Skills Guide Series (www.keypublishing.com) co authored with Mike Wild, - painting a model isn’t like sitting your accountancy exams – it’s meant to be fun. Yeah right. Accountancy has the simplest of rules – debits on the left, credits on the right. Painting has many more alternatives and opportunities to go wrong! A recent experience proves my point. 6 P and J Models (sadly no longer in business) log bunk kits have resided in my cupboard since 2007. That in itself is bad practice in my experience because on several occasions in the past I have needed replacements for parts I have broken or lost from kits and they have not been available because of obsolescence or the manufacturer going out of business as happened in this instance. But I digress. The log bunk kits were built and ready for painting several years ago but I had dithered over the choice of couplings and the trucks did not run properly – there being quite a high level of friction so the dreaded ‘p’ day could be delayed.

The poor running of the bogies was addressed first. Some brass bearings (clothing eyelets) became available from Coopercraft (www.cooper-craft.co.uk/home) Festiniog slate wagon kits, the reason being I replaced the plastic wheels supplied with those kits with Tenmille (www.tenmille.com) ones which had metal axles and tyres. The latter however had smaller bosses (1.8mm) as against the 3mm of the originally supplied wheels so to sort out the slate wagons I had to turn bearings from Vesconite, a specialised thermoplastic made from internally lubricated polymers on my Unimat (refer www.maizey.co.za/

for a description and South African supplier of Vesconite which is the ideal material for applications like these). Invert the wagon, spin the wheels and they turn for a remarkably long time.



Plastic wheels replaced with Tenmille “curly spoked” wheels with metal tyres catalogue no AG087. (Anyone interested in a supply of redundant 32mm gauge plastic wheels?!?) Brass “eyelet” bearing replaced with Vesconite bearing.

I now had brass bearings for the log bunks. All I had to do was drill out the white metal side frames, press fit the bearings and my friction problem was solved!

That left the coupler issue and a decision was made to fit white metal pockets supplied by Brandbright (www.brandbright.co.uk) in the UK. (Unfortunately the ones I wanted were no longer available so I ended up with loco rather than wagon coupler pockets).

Now there was no excuse to delay painting any further so the airbrush, compressor and Tamiya acrylic paint (some of which is probably over 20 years old!) was dug out from the cupboard and off I went.

What a sanguinary mess ensued in my garage! There was paint everywhere – on my hands, on my clothes, on my shoes, on the workbench, on the floor, on the compressor, all over the airbrush - and a tiny quantity on the bogies I was trying to paint.

But not to be discouraged, after a visit to the pharmacy to acquire latex gloves and a consult with my friend Alick Horne who has had many years' experience in this field, the second attempt went much better. Much less paint where it should not have been and some where it was actually intended! In fact after the black paint had covered the white metal, a light dusting with brown to simulate rust was applied and the results, even if I say so myself, were pretty good. And then reality hit again. The slightest knock to the painted surface of the bogies and the

paint chipped off. Another hard lesson, in fact two: unless you apply a final coat of varnish don't use acrylics for this kind of application and to ensure the paint adheres apply a primer of some kind before spraying on the top coat.

Back to the drawing board: 24 bogey frames and 12 coupler pockets had to be stripped back to bare metal. Not a lot of fun. Start again!

An aerosol can of Tamiya (clear) metal primer together with 2K black paint, hardener and thinners was acquired from Hobbytech in Westville.

The Tamiya primer went on like a treat and next it was time for the 2K which as the name suggests is a two part acrylic enamel paint manufactured by Chemspec at Canelands. The main use of this paint is in the automotive industry. The basic raw materials are acrylic resin and a poly-isocyanate resin hardener. The mixing ratio is 2 parts paint to 1 part hardener and anything between 5% and 20% lacquer thinners.

Before describing what ensued, a description of my airbrush experiences will perhaps enable others to learn from my mistakes.

My airbrush is a Japanese made Iwata HP SB now at least 20 years old. It was bought second hand several years ago and in fact I have two of them as the second one, in an inoperative state, was "thrown in" with the first. A couple of years ago I bought new 'O' rings for the non operational one in the understanding that this was the problem but never got around to fitting the replacement part. But as the ghost of J Caesar said there is a tide in the affairs of men etc so I carefully started dismantling it. That proved to be a difficult task as the inside of the airbrush body was totally clogged with solidified paint. The only way to free the needle was to drip thinners from the rear of the body and from the nozzle and keep cleaning the openings where the metal cup and the blanking cover fitted with pipe cleaners. This process took a long time but my patience was rewarded. Eventually the whole brush was clean and being dismantled it was possible to fit a new 'O' ring, having established the old one was perished. After re-assembly a test revealed that it was operating perfectly. Having gained confidence with the one, the second brush received the same treatment and although there was nothing really wrong with it a good clean out service and the fitting of a new 'O' ring was probably beneficial.

Despite its age, spares are still readily available for the Iwata HP SB.

Apart from the 'O' ring the only bits that seem to wear out are the needle

and the nozzle but that is with far heavier usage than my brushes will ever be subjected to so I purchased some spare 'O' rings (from Graphic Air in the UK, (www.graphicair.co.uk) and that should see me out! Refer photo below to obtain an idea of how much paint was removed from the first airbrush.



As is the case with a wide range of subjects, the web is a good source of inspiration and practical guidance with respect to airbrushing. The best video on the subject I have come across is "Introduction to Airbrushing with Ken Schlotfeld" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsW-vNO_IHw (1 and a half hours long and written from a war gamers perspective but nevertheless an excellent comprehensive introduction to the subject). So how did the painting of the bogies and couplings go the second time around? There is a cliché that a bad workman blames his tools. In this instance, second time around I had the right equipment.



An old IBM printer box from the eighties which had been stored in a cupboard in my garage since it became redundant in the office all those years ago was dug out. I knew I would eventually find a use for it! The box has an extractor fan on the side with a filter so the box became my “spray booth”. In addition to the airbrush and compressor, the accessories included a rotating plate (turntable), cleaning station with hanger, a latex glove, self clamping tweezers (to hold small parts while they are being painted) and a face mask (necessity if spraying enamel paints which require solvents like lacquer thinners which invariably contain ketones which are not exactly good for your health) are the minimum required in my opinion to airbrush satisfactorily.

The 2K paint has one major advantage and a couple of disadvantages. Dealing firstly with the former, being a two part resin based acrylic enamel paint, the result is a hard wearing abrasion resistant covering material which can be used in a wide range of applications. The finish, however, is glossy, a disadvantage in this situation. In this instance I should probably have used a standard enamel paint. However, an overspray of Tamiya NATO Brown dulled the glossy black 2K finish.

Photo taken from above of couplers and bogey frames awaiting painting in the spray booth

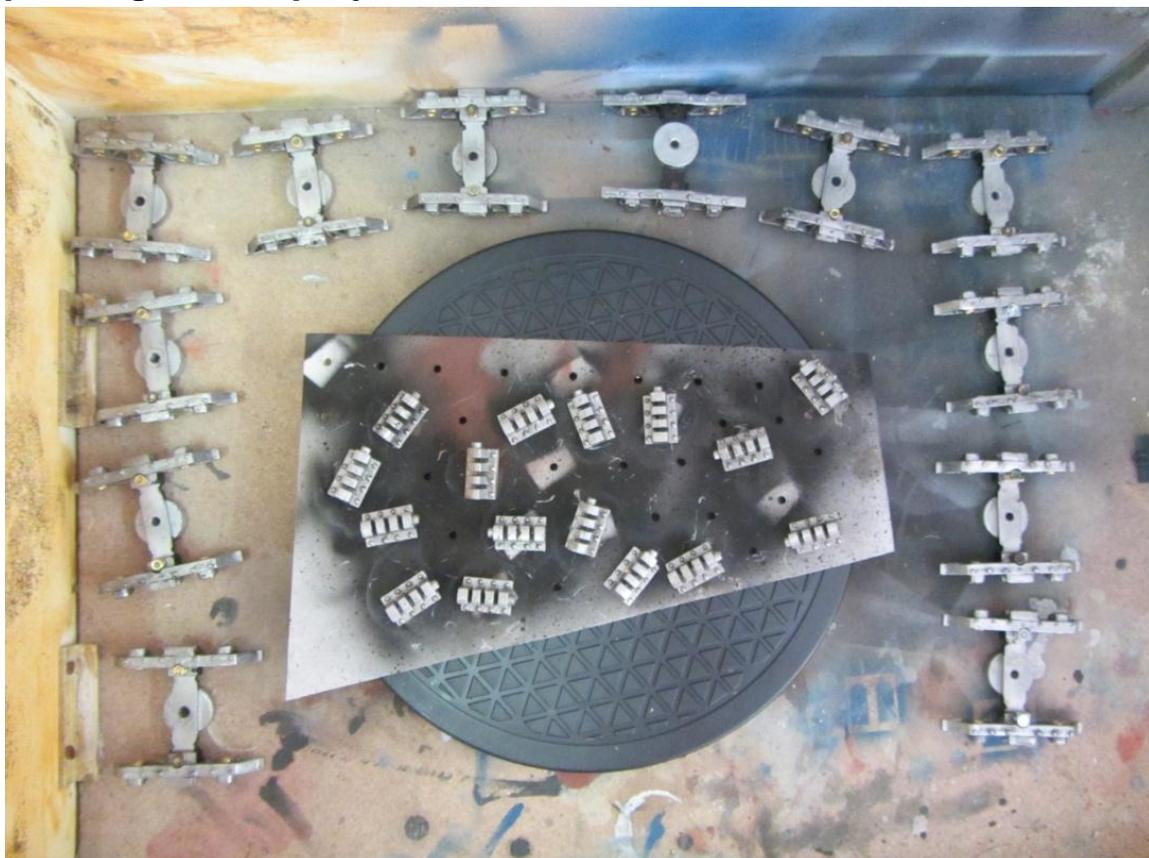
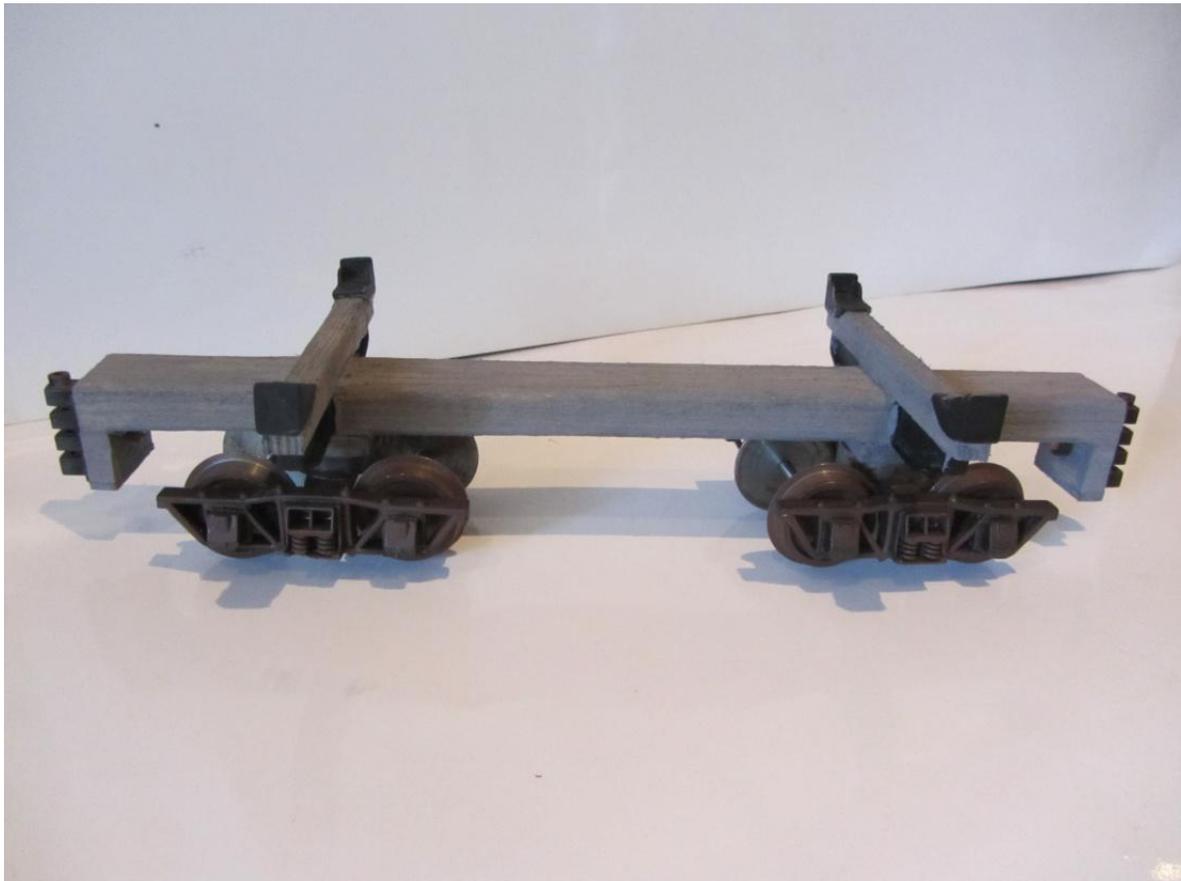


Photo of P&J Models Log Bunk with bogies and coupler pockets fitted



There is more work required to complete the models. The rear of the wheels and the axles are still shiny so they will have to be painted. In addition I need to fit timber loads with securing chains and perhaps some other finishing details. But it has to be remembered that the object of the exercise in this instance is not competition standard models. My steam locos need loads to pull and as long as they run properly and satisfy the 6' rule (if it looks ok from 6' away, it is ok!) then I will be happy.

In the meantime lots of other projects are underway including fitting a sound card to a radio controlled Accucraft Baguley Drewry diesel. Let us say this is proving to be a challenge which will be featured in a later NSC.

Also I have started building one of six Jurassic 16mm kits of a SAR narrow gauge fruit van as used on the PE Avontuur line. So far it has proven to be a relatively easy project except when one of the sides is installed upside down. Don't ask me how I found that out