



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

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Editorial

This month tells the story of the construction of 6 16mm scale models of the SAR NG tall fruit vans as used to operate on the 2 foot gauge Port Elizabeth to Avontuur line. These wagons were the largest type of covered van to be found on the line and were converted from earlier NG OZ-6 Fruit Vans and NG OZ-5 Cattle Wagons. The conversion involved raising the height of the the roof by just over 18 inches, offsetting the doors to the left, replacing the insulating materials and adding adjustable ventilators to the ends.

Several tall fruit vans are preserved at Sandstone Railway making it relatively easy for the modeller to refer to the prototype for accuracy when replicating them in miniature. The instructions in the CD supplied have photos of these.

Fruit van kit construction for dummies

The design of the kits was undertaken by Raif Copley of Templecombe UK. The actual wooden laser cut kits were produced by Mike Johnson of Jurassic models.

(mike.jurassic@btinternet.com - product websites available but not his own). I collected my kits at the 16mm Narrow Gauge Railway Exhibition at Peterborough in April 2013. Having space and weight constraints on my flight the kits had to be posted to South Africa. When they eventually arrived I decided to build one to get the hang of the correct procedure for putting them together and then try to build the rest in batches. The main lesson learned was not to install the outer side skins of the 'box' upside down because the result looks funny. Don't ask me how I know that.....

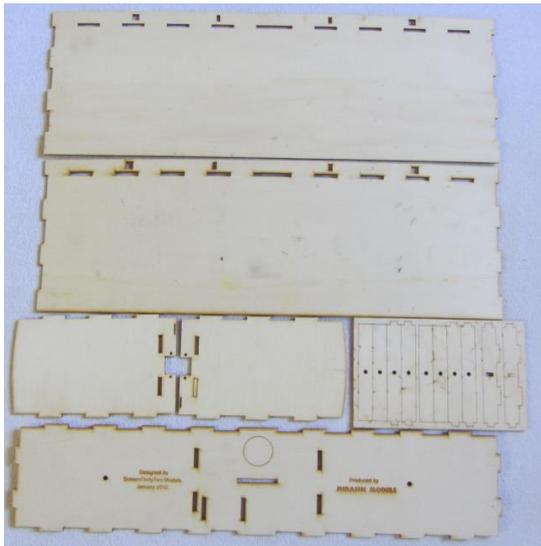
Fortunately when I did this with the first kit Mike Johnson very kindly replaced the skin damaged during its removal. So having served my apprenticeship so to speak I then started on another couple of kits. Work progressed extremely slowly. The first kit took approximately a year to get to nearly complete status albeit there were many starts and stops along the way. The only time that the next kits had any work done on them was when we visited the game park!

At Christmas time while on holiday I resolved to make a major effort to complete the remaining kits and this is the story of that exercise.

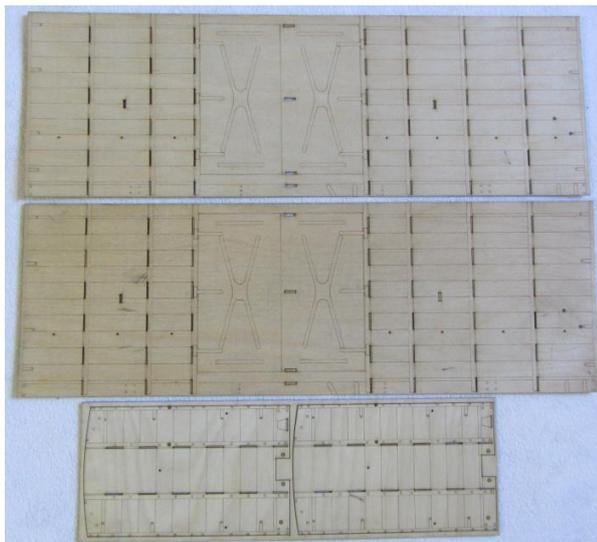
There are a couple of options regarding the adhesive to use to glue together the wooden kits. I recommend cold glue (Alcolin or Ponal) but the type that will dissolve if water is applied to the joins. This may seem an odd recommendation and the reason for it will be readily understood from what follows. But speaking generally there are few if any spare parts with these kits so if a mistake is made it is good to be able to unstick them.

Let's start with what the kit comprises: (CD supplied excluded)

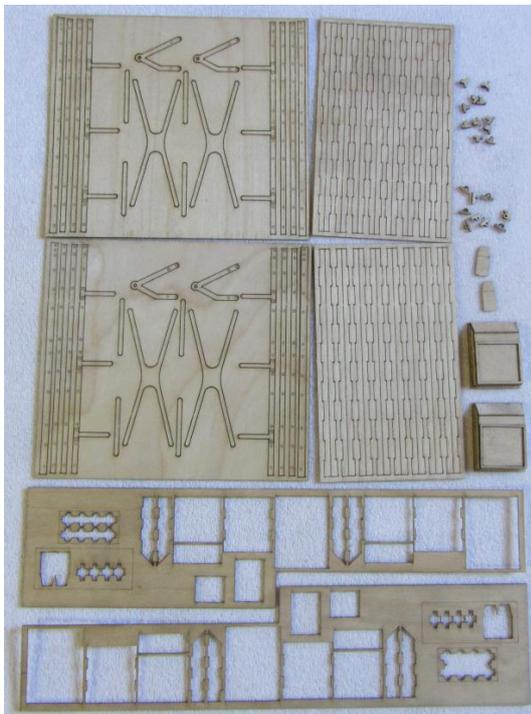
The 'box' components



The outer 'skins'



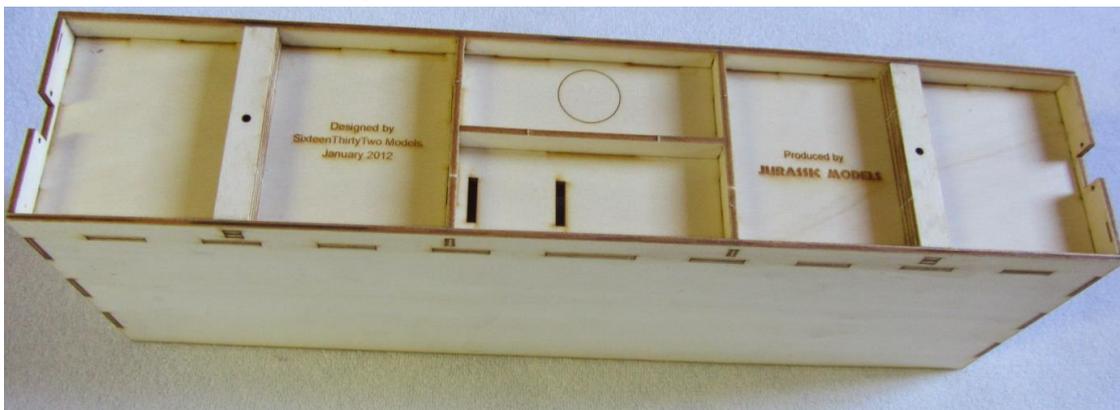
The 'fiddly' bits



Roof components



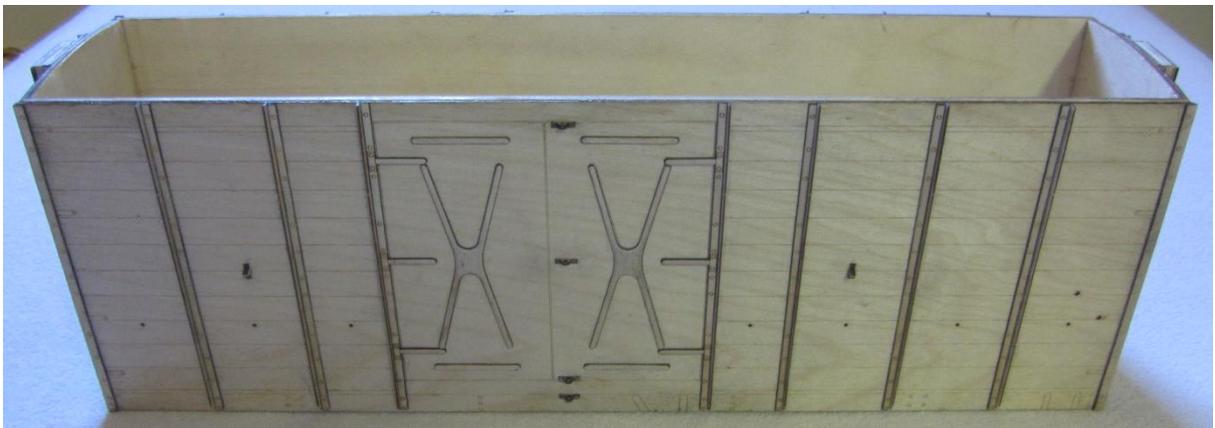
Underside of completed box



Top view of completed box



Ribs and door fittings added. 'Just' the 'metalwork' to do



'Metalwork' added



Top view of inside of box with 3mm stainless steel laser cut plate to add weight and bracing to the van



So things were going quite well. The boxes for wagons 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 were complete with 2, 3, 4 and 5 having their 'pyjamas' on.

The bogies were done in a batch. On the first kit I turned vesconite bearings on the lathe but this was not really necessary. The steel axles run perfectly well in the white metal castings. All I had to do was drill out holes of sufficient size in the castings to accommodate the axles.

Then the wheels fell off (excuse the pun). In a moment of over confidence/impetuosity/stupidity, on the last kit I did it again – installed one of the side skins upside down! Now for slow learners like me perhaps the recommendation to use an adhesive that is water soluble can be readily understood.

In the unlikely event of anyone ever experiencing the same problem the process for removing the skin is described below.

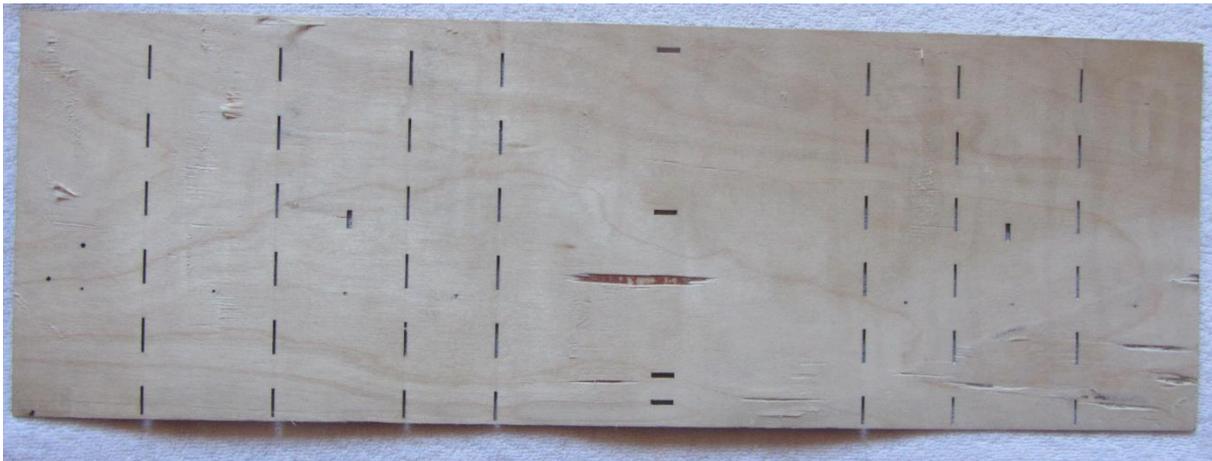
With a small paint brush start in a corner and work water in between the box and the outer skin to weaken the adhesive.

Next open up the gap created with a steel ruler (I used my Model Railroad Scale - stainless steel one – see photo below)

and paint in more water. Repeat, running the ruler along the gap. It took most of a day to completely separate the side skin

from the box and the result is shown below. The outer side was undamaged hence the side skin was reusable – the object of the exercise.

Underside of skin fitted upside down after removal



Ensuring the damaged outer skin adhered to the box



Having fitted the metal parts to the kits and Accucraft couplings (supplied) the next step was my favourite part (not) – painting. In fact this was a remarkably non traumatic exercise. I used Spectra aerosol spray paints widely available at hardware shops. The fruit vans received a coat of grey primer followed by a top coat of wheel silver. Still to do are the decals (also supplied) and weathering. Both will be covered at some stage in future North Star Chronicles but I need to ‘grid up my lions’ as the debased expression goes before tackling the former!

The (almost) finished article – stirrups and decalling to do



Another view



I am sure you will agree with me that Raif and Mike have done an excellent job with designing and producing these South African prototype (see below) based kits.

***And finally the prototype at Sandstone. Note the short fruit van to the right in the photo immediately below
Photos courtesy Chris Webster***



***Don't forget the Model Railway exhibition at Westville Civic Centre 28th and 29th May.
Take the train!***