

THE 009



SOCIETY

009 NEWS

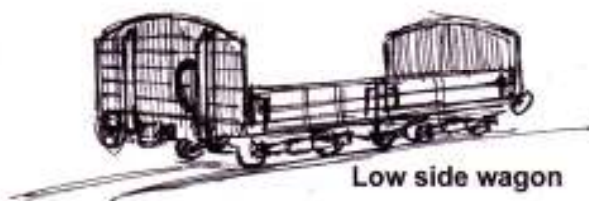
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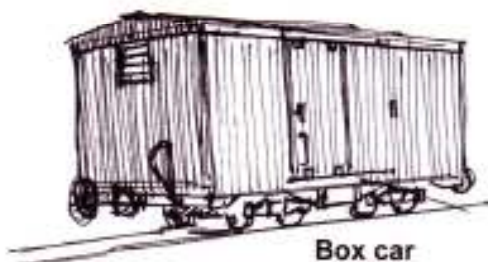
Drop side wagon



Low side wagon



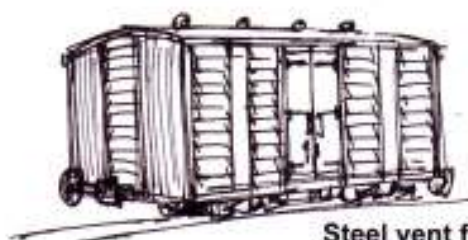
Side door wagon



Box car



Box car



Steel vent fruit van



Passenger Brake combine

An assortment of rolling stock from the pen of Jim Hurley

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Werner Knopf introduces his layout

With an invitation by the highly admired 009 modeller John Varley in such a subtle manner as in the November 2000 issue of the 009 NEWS, I couldn't find any excuse for not providing a report on my WEK Private Railway! (W.E.K. stands for: Wilhelmstal - Elisabethen - Knopfbach)

History

In a hilly area somewhere in the German-speaking part of Continental Europe we find the small city of Wilhelmstal, situated on the banks of the river Knopfbach. Thanks to the narrow gauge railway, connecting Wilhelmstal to the rest of the world, it prospered to become a lively and attractive place with a reasonable amount of industry, of which a bicycle factory is the most prominent representative. But the railway also laid the foundations of quite a respectable tourist trade. This, not unimportantly, brings many narrow gauge light railway enthusiasts to Wilhelmstal and its surroundings.

The roots of the WEK date back to the nineteenth century, when in a remote area such as North Wales, the Ffestiniog Railway earned its glory by several pacemaking innovations such as steam locomotives and bogie coaches on the narrow gauge. After several visits to Wales, some far-sighted notabilities of the borough of Wilhelmstal came to the conclusion, that the Ffestiniog's success could be repeated in their region.

Throughout its history the WEK quite often adopted proven designs from elsewhere for their purposes. Motive power and rolling stock came from all over Europe, either being abandoned by less successful railway companies (that had to fail because they certainly did not put their customers first!) or - on the other hand - copied from the very successful and redesigned as necessary in the WEK's own works. But there are also vehicles of genuine WEK design, as for instance their Janus-faced inspection car.

The WEK owns a little model railway layout which is used for advertising the real thing at numerous occasions. This layout spends most of its lifetime in the living room of the WEK's General Manager, but quite frequently it travels around to take part in model railway exhibitions. Thus the WEK even visited Porthmadog and the Ffestiniog Railway on two occasions. It is just this layout that this report is all about and gives an impression of the WEK Private Railway Company (Privatbahn-Gesellschaft).

Layout, Track Plan, Buildings

The layout consists of four segments (dividing at "T", see layout plan). In the centre you can see the station of Wilhelmstal with all the facilities of a typical light railway headquarters. It features a steam loco depot with roundhouse and coaling yard (with hand-woven coal baskets), a shed for the diesel locomotives with workshop and fuelling point. The station building - as almost all the edifices on the layout - has been erected to the General Manager's own architecture. Its roof is fabricated from over 3000 paper "slates" (witness the General manager's affection for Wales!), and the balcony railing is soldered from 0,2 mm (80thou) copper wire. It is the challenge of producing scratchbuilt miniatures, that keeps the WEK's workshops busy. Even the barriers at the level crossing are entirely DIY, because at the time of construction no models were available that showed the guard wires influenced by the forces of gravity, thus hanging vertically in both opened and closed position.

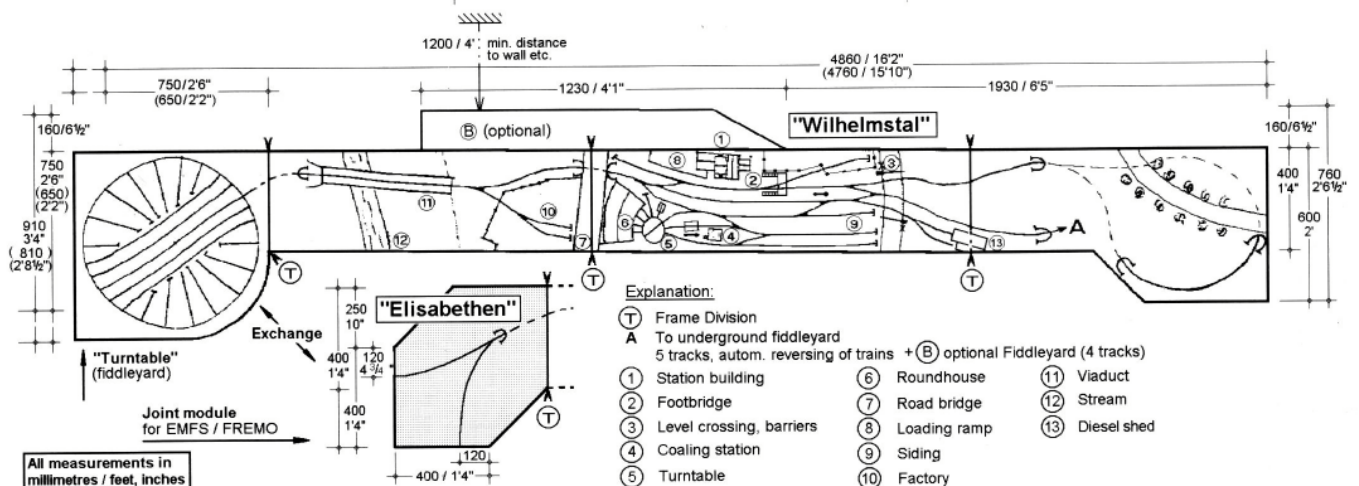
Two railway tracks leave Wilhelmstal in an easterly direction. The one close to the backdrop rises to the remote tunnel mouth. Once swallowed by the tunnel, the train stops and waits in a concealed position. After reversing a switch the train emerges at

the scenic route on the far right end of the layout. It then returns to Wilhelmstal. The other track leaves the station by the tunnel in the foreground. Hidden by the hill, the trains are reversed before entering a spiral which leads down to a five track storage yard. This is located about 6 inches underneath the station yard. The trains return loco forward to the surface by a track triangle.

The western exit of Wilhelmstal crosses under the street by a bridge behind the roundhouse. The track passes behind the factory, a very fine piece of brick architecture, which "at the moment" (= five years already!) is concealed by the artwork of Christo. As everybody knows, he wrapped the Berlin Reichstag immediately before doing the same to the bicycle factory in Wilhelmstal. Emerging from behind the factory, the trains then cross the river "Knopfbach" by a high stone viaduct to leave the scenic part of the layout by a tunnel to the second storage yard. This consists of a large turntable with five through tracks (each 700 mm long) for complete trains and fourteen short sections for single locos or wagons. Only the track lined up to the rest of the layout is fed by contacts underneath the turntable, so that there is almost no wiring to this fiddle yard. This installation yard has been greatly inspired by British model railway practice, of which the WEK's General Manager has always been a great admirer!

"Living" Personnel

All the traffic on the WEK could not be mastered without the help of my ardent work-fellows. They are in fact animated "Preisers", who benefited from some reasonable amount of microsurgery. One of them stands on the turntable by the roundhouse and works it by the crank. He never gets tired because he is said to refuse union membership! The next is a shunter, standing on the step of a goods wagon, giving hand signals to the engine





Inspection car with rail bicycle



Layout in the living room, protected by glass windows



Roundhouse with "manually driven" turntable, inspection car with trailer



Fairlie locomotive, coaling station



Diesel shed with fuelling point, V 29 diesel loco



Station building, V 22 diesel loco

driver. This driver himself is enabled to turn his head to the direction of travel by some very delicate gear drive in the tiny tank engine's right water tank. The fourth of them has a day off and waves to the loco crews and passengers as the trains cross the great viaduct. Quite recently another batch of four figures added to the layout's liveliness: The dog in front of the level crossing's barrier eagerly wags its tail as soon the lights are

flashing and the bell starts ringing. Three more visitors to Wilhelmstal turn their heads at the crossing to watch the trains go by.

To be continued....

All Photos by Werner Knopf



The company Logo

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Top: the Wood End filling station [photo - Chris Ford]



Top Left: Blanche, heading a goods train on the WEK [photo - Werner Knopf]

Left: Viaduct over the "Knopfbach", with Czech diesel loco, transporter cars with standard gauge wagons. [photo - Werner Knopf]

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Pewsey, 4th August
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**Porthmadog model railway exhibition,
4-5th August**

The W.E.K. Privatbahn Gesellschaft (2)

Werner Knopf's layout

Rolling Stock

In the mid-eighties, however, I was very tempted to change to the 0/16,5-gauge being frustrated with the poor running performance of the N gauge chassis of that time. The introduction of the coreless motor (e.g. Faulhaber) with flywheel, combined with precision gears, kept me from changing scale! Consequently all the locos were converted one after the other during the next years. From then on I really started to enjoy operating the layout!

The pride of the WEK is the Double-Fairlie "Iarll Meirionnydd", of typical FR design. The model is entirely scratch built, including the chassis. I originally intended to construct a proper chassis to fit the Langley kit. The main design parameters were that it should run smoothly and have the correct wheel diameter. It ended up with exceptionally good running qualities so that the chassis itself was too good to put the whitmetal kit on top of it! Consequently the whole loco was constructed new from brass and nickel silver.

As previously mentioned, my modelling has been greatly inspired by the British art of model railway building. Consequently, I appreciated the whitmetal kits that were already available in the late seventies, when there was almost nothing on the continental market, at least regarding the narrow gauge. There is a typical selection of kit built British locomotives, built on commercially available N gauge chassis or those of my own design. The most prominent examples of this group are the FR's "Prince", a Manning Wardle 2-6-4 (converted L&B design), the WD Baldwin 2-6-0, "Douglas" from the Tallylyn and most recently the K1-Garratt and the FR's "Blanche", both from Backwoods' kits - difficult to build, but excellent!

But it's not all British! The WEK owns a variety of narrow gauge locomotives both steam and diesel powered, coming from all parts of Europe. The latest acquisition are two 0-2-2-0 diesel engines built to Czech design. The prototype is running on the Bohemian lines from Jindrichuv Hradec to Nová Bystrice and Obratan, where there are still another eight of them in daily use.

Other locos came from Austria, e.g. the famous 2095 diesel (Liliput), a converted Mariazell "diesel"-electric loco (Roco, recognizable by the exhaust instead of the current bow collector on the roof) and the class "U" steam locos (Liliput), Switzerland, such as the regauged RhB shunting tractor (Bemo) and the Waldenburg steam loco with the head-turning engine driver.

Another group is of somewhat German origin. A Wismar railcar (Bemo) with trailer copes with the demand for public transport, together with another railcar of genuine WEK design and a more modern diesel articulated railcar, which was converted from a regauged

Mainz metre gauge tramcar (Lima) by installing a generator to operate the original electric tram motors. This again can be recognised by certain changes on the roof! Diesel engines are the two V 51, the V 22 (Bemo) and the regauged (from metre gauge) V 29 (Panier), which all worked the Wuerttemberg narrow gauge and the tiny V 3 from the former Rhein-Sieg-Eisenbahn. Steam locos are the "Frank S." (Weinert model) and my first completely scratchbuilt (without the use of a lathe or milling machine!) 0-6-0 tank engine "Willi".

Coaches are of British (Parkside Dundas), Austrian (Liliput and their successors) and German (Bemo and Technomodel) origin. Goods wagons and vans are employed on a wide variety of duties, many of them converted in the WEK's own workshops as required. Standard gauge waggons are being conveyed by special transporter cars, similar to those of the bygone Leek & Mainfold.

Last but not least, the p. w. department has some special vehicles for its tasks, such as an East German "Schoeneweide" rail tractor, improved by the installation of a hydraulic crane and a little inspection car (the Spieth-kit-model is actually driven by a micro drive - Faulhaber, flywheel - in the scratchbuilt tool van behind). Should there be any snow obstructing the smooth operation, even a snowplough of Saxonian design (Spieth model) can be pushed into service. The increasing fuel prices leave at least one alternative to the WEK: the p.w. department owns a rail bicycle (Spieth model), entirely driven by its operator's well trained muscles. At the moment, however, this vehicle is being towed by the Janus-faced inspection car because of failure of the drive chain!

Operation

This (though incomplete) list of the WEK's rolling stock should give an idea of the variety of traffic with which this extraordinary railway enterprise is able to cope with! There are reports about exhibition visitors (especially those around ten years old) that could watch the traffic and shunting in Wilhelmstal for hours, without signs of exhaustion.

The layout is operated by the central control panel, which is attached to the layout by a four metre cable with more than 150 cores. The panel can thus be put both in front (at home) or behind (at exhibitions) the layout. The turntable fiddle yard with the line over the viaduct can optionally be operated by a small separate control panel, which allows operation also into the factory's sidings.

When at exhibitions Wilhelmstal is connected to other layouts by the Elisabethen-module and it is possible to hand over control to the connecting railway

line. Trains can be operated right into the next station by the controls of Wilhelmstal, or the operator of the next station can drive the train with his controls, once it has left Wilhelmstal and reached the viaduct. This allows for extended flexibility and makes operation according to real timetables a great joy! To allow for realistic timetables the shortened distances of almost any model railway line (even one hundred feet of layout length only represent little more than 1½ mile of the real thing!) [footnote: The "Schmalspur-Session" (Narrow Gauge Session) to be held in March each year at Cologne, creates a large H0e modular layout of around 70 metres in length, containing more than 15 stations or plants. This, I'm afraid, still is only 6 scale kilometres with stations at average distances of only 450 scale metres..!] can be compensated by an acceleration of model time. The Wilhelmstal control panel contains a master clock, that can feed a time signal with an adjustable ratio of 1:1 to 1:10 (i.e. six real seconds make one model minute) to other clock dials of the whole modular layout. Alternatively, the Wilhelmstal clock can also be driven by an external time signal.

The whole operation of Wilhelmstal is completely manual and not digitalised. The only exception is the fully automated underground storage yard. It features automatic reversing of trains and has signalling of track occupation to the control panel. This signalling of occupation also applies to all other hidden tracks. This really is all the "automation", John Varley reported of - everything else on the layout is really manually controlled! This in particular applies to the whole operation in Wilhelmstal station itself. Even the turntable by the roundhouse is controlled by sight only and has no automatic stopping at the track sections leading to and from the turntable track. But this kind of operation even keeps long exhibition sessions lively and busy.

Wilhelmstal started life as a layout in 1981, thus giving the opportunity to celebrate a 20 year jubilee in 2001. There are many future projects, as well as improving the operational fleet, perhaps adding some more "living people" (new ideas are always welcome!) and changes to Wilhelmstal's countryside. It is certainly not boring to operate and watch Wilhelmstal for hours on end - and I most probably shall for many years to come!



Top left: P.W. gang at work

Above: "Wrapped Factory", V3 diesel loco with standard gauge waggon on a transporter car

Left: "Turntable"-fiddleyard

Below: Shunter, giving hand signals to the driver



Left: Head-turning engine driver!

Below Left: Articulated diesel-electric railcar, Czech diesel loco emerging from the tunnel

Below: K1 Garratt, with modified cab

All Photos by Werner Knopf

