

# CONTINENTAL MODELLER

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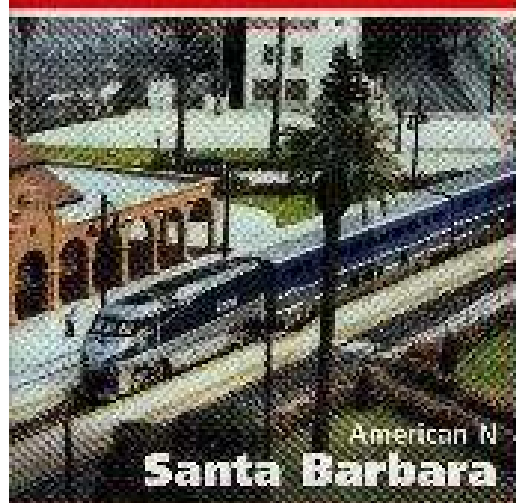
FEATURING RAILWAYS FROM AROUND THE WORLD EACH MONTH

## Grusch to St. Nicklaus

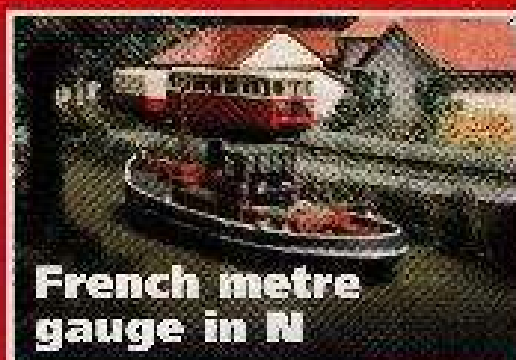
Scenic Swiss HOm



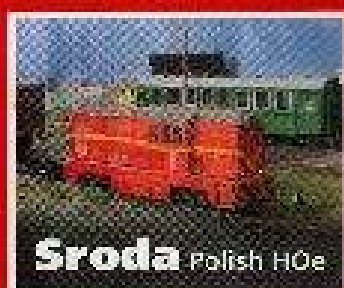
Inside this issue...



American N  
**Santa Barbara**



**French metre  
gauge in N**



**Sroda** Polish HOe

**Latest Reviews ... and much more**

# CONTINENTAL MODELLER

October 2011

Volume 33

Number 10

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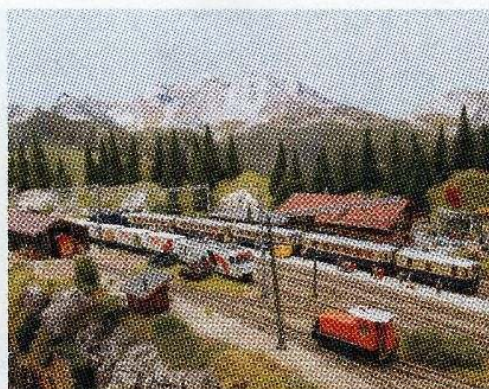
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## RAILWAY MODELLER

For all modelling British railway practice.  
Published on the second Thursday  
of the preceding month.



Cover

The Alpine Classic Pullman Express passes a train of containers in the metre gauge station of St.Niklaus on the scenic Swiss HO scale layout constructed by Frans Oleo.

Photograph: Frans Oleo.

## Home and away

Having commented last month that the exhibition season was upon us again, this month the *Exhibition Diary* is even fuller. As we only include entries, drawn from the comprehensive listing every month in *RAILWAY MODELLER*, which mention that the event includes overseas prototype layouts, we take this as an encouraging indication of interest in continental modelling.

It is therefore no accident that several of the articles in this issue link layouts to sundry show appearances, though the range of subjects still offers lots of variety, we trust, and our 'Railway of the Month' is definitely not portable, occupying the kind of railway room which many of us might envy.

Of course, it is not simply size that determines portability – the 'Plan of the Month' in this issue, *RS Tower*, specifically designed as an exhibition layout, learning from experience with a predecessor, is quite large even in its basic form, and has become the basis of a collection of additional modules which also can be deployed without the 'parent' layout. The potential flexibility of a modular system, which can be set up to suit the space available, is obvious; it also provides the opportunity for running long trains over long distances, which brings new challenges in control and operation.

Similarly, the *WEK Bahn* began as a private layout which was adapted to facilitate transport and display, and has more recently been modified to allow connection at modular gatherings. The freelance concept has given the layout a long life, and it is especially notable for the ingenious animated figures – the static ones would be clever enough, but those which are on moving platforms are something else. The layout will be making a rare appearance in the UK at the Manchester show.

For those able to travel further, the same weekend at the start of the month will see the massive *modell-hobby-spiel* event in Leipzig, the model railway section of which includes CM contributors Michael Kirsch and Wolfgang Stöber, among many others.

At the end of the month, there is another unfortunate clash of worthwhile shows – Eurospoor at Utrecht in The Netherlands and Expo Narrow Gauge at Swanley, both of which feature CM and RM contributors.

Further information on all these events, and more, can be found in *Exhibition Diary*.

## Warley National Model Railway Exhibition

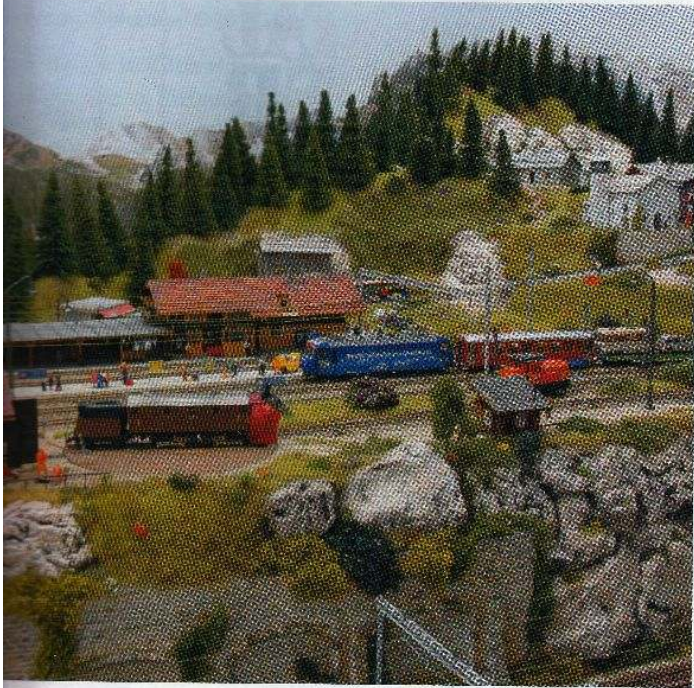
It is not too early to mention that advance tickets are available for the Warley show at the National Exhibition Centre on Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th November.

As well as avoiding queues at the box office, advance ticket holders benefit from early entry to the hall – moved back another half-hour to 9.00am this year – and of course a reduced price: adult one day £10.00, two day £18.00; junior (5-16) one day £6.50, two day £11.00; family (2+3) one day (only) £30.00.

Cheques should be made payable to 'Warley MRC Exhibitions Ltd.' and posted to Warley National Model Railway Exhibition, Advance Ticket Sales, 8, Thorncliffe Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, B44 9DB. Please include a stamped addressed envelope of DL size (22cm x 11cm) for the return of the tickets.

Further information (but not online booking) at [www.thewarleyshow.co.uk](http://www.thewarleyshow.co.uk)

The list of exhibitors (and traders) includes much that may interest CM readers, and several layouts which have featured in these pages – full details next month.

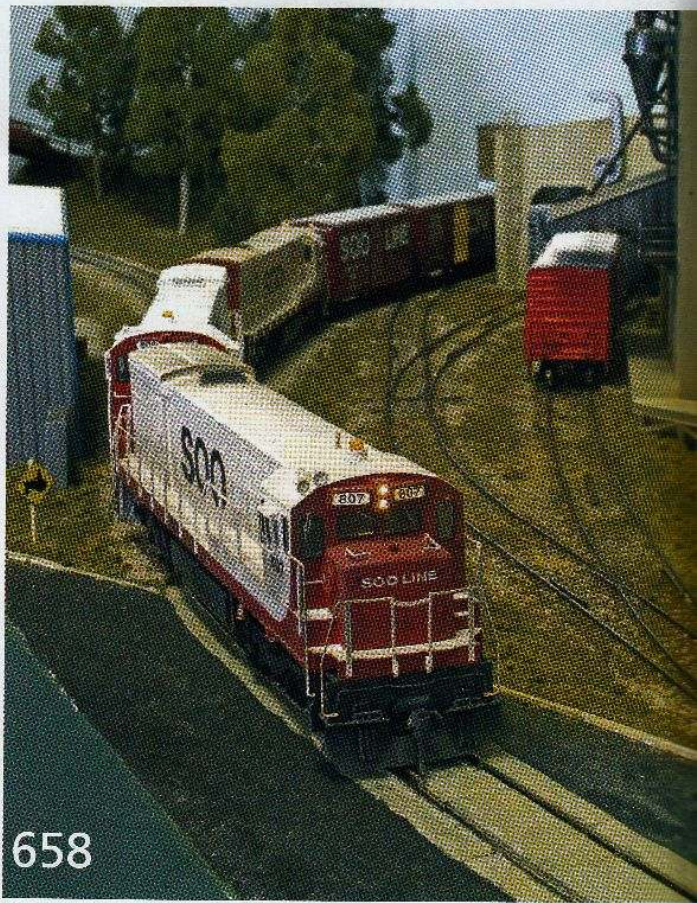


TH

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**658 RS TOWER – PLAN OF THE MONTH**

Martyn Read describes a team-built US HO layout intended to accommodate a wide variety of stock, which has become the basis of a collection of modules.

**666 30 YEARS of the WEK**

Werner Knopf describes a private narrow gauge railway which operates in 1:87 scale on 9mm gauge track (HOe) – and features some very active personnel!

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Wim Harthoorn looks at the interesting background to what has become a busy commuter line in Thailand. The present situation will be described in a second article.

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Richard Ellis-Hobbs describes his HOe Polish narrow gauge layout, based on a station on the 750mm gauge line from Sroda to Zaniemysl.

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Roy Hirst describes some of his authentically loaded rolling stock for a First World War OO9 layout.

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# 30 years of The WEK Bahn

## Wilhelmstal – Elisabethen – Knopfbach

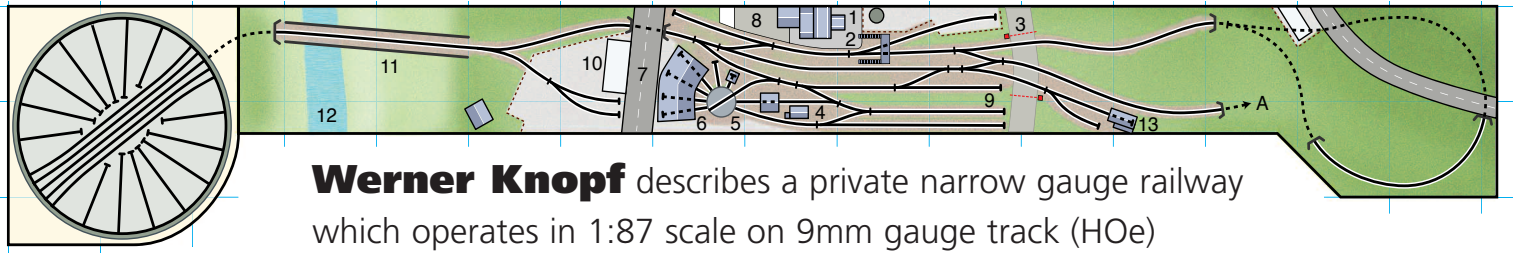
**T**hirty years – there might not be many layouts that keep their creators and operators busy for such a long time! And the history starts long before the first sod for the present layout was turned, i.e. the first saw cut was done, back in 1981.

### Prehistory

I completed dismantling my old Märklin layout when I was still a student. Building this layout, in the basement of my childhood home, was started when I was fourteen years old and kept me busy for about seven years. Dismantling was really hard work, as the layout was built for eternity. Baseboards were fixed against the walls, as was the scenery, so I should call it rather demolition than dismantling.

The consequence of this experience was that I now wanted a new layout which could easily be disassembled and moved around. Being a student I knew it would take some time until I would find a permanent home. So a segmental layout was the order of the day, at that time much influenced by British modelling practice.





**Werner Knopf** describes a private narrow gauge railway which operates in 1:87 scale on 9mm gauge track (HOe) – and features some very active personnel!

Left  
A railcar and driving trailer set augmented with two extra coaches crossing the Knopfbach viaduct. Photographs by the author.

Below left  
The former Mainz tram (a Lima model) has been regauged and fitted with a diesel generator.

Below  
Festiniog 2-4-0ST+T *Blanche* emerges from the top tunnel and passes the signal box on the approach to Wilhelmstal while the scenery in this area was being refurbished.

It was a few years before dismantling the old layout that I was infected by the narrow gauge 'virus'. At that time in southern Germany the Jagsttalbahn (Möckmühl – Dörzbach) was being taken over by enthusiasts who wanted to establish a museum railway. In Austria several 760mm gauge railways were still in operation. And finally a visit to the Festiniog Railway in 1976, together with the acquisition of P.D.Hancock's book *Narrow Gauge Adventure*, led to a major reconstruction of the old HO layout. About half of it was consequently covered with hilly scenery, hiding the continuous circle of the Märklin railway and giving room for a narrow gauge line from the valley to the top. Bemo had just entered the market with an excellent model of the German V51 B-B diesel loco and some Württemberg rolling stock. Liliput's Austrian class U steam loco and the class 2095 diesel were about the only ready-to-run models available then. My visits to the UK introduced me to the world of affordable whitmetal body kits for use on N gauge mechanisms – quite different from what I knew in Germany. This variety led to the decision to establish my own freelance railway company to be able to operate all these models together on one line.

Layout size 16'2" x 2'6" maximum Each grid square = 1 sq.ft.

- |                    |                  |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 station building | 2 footbridge     | 3 level crossing |
| 4 coal stage       | 5 turntable      | 6 roundhouse     |
| 7 road bridge      | 8 loading dock   | 9 goods yard     |
| 10 factory         | 11 viaduct       | 12 river         |
| 13 diesel shed     | A to fiddle yard |                  |

### Planning

A rather quiet job as a watchman at weekends during my university studies left enough time for some very detailed planning. Every minute detail was drawn, even plans of how to cut the boards with minimum scrap were created. So the start of the new layout was straightforward and from the first saw cut to the wired and operational track took only about three weeks – of full time work, of course!

The new layout was to be purely narrow gauge. The obvious advantages compared to HO standard gauge were short trains being prototypical, together with comparatively sharp curves. This allowed a more convincing and complex operation in a restricted space.

The layout started with a size of only 9' by 1'4", expanded at one end to 2' to give room for a loop and spiral. In the beginning the track plan featured a terminus with three main tracks. Two lines terminated in the station, both emerging from tunnels with a short stretch of visible track in between. One line is nothing more than a loop, which emerges into the open for part of its length. The other uses a spiral to go under the station area, where it ends in a five-track fiddle yard. A triangle is used to back the trains into the underground tracks, from where they can return to the station without the need for the engines to run round the train.

The station has also a loco servicing area with roundhouse and turntable, and some sidings.

The two baseboards were more like boxes, with the visible tracks on the surface, and the fiddle yard and loop, together with the power supply, all being 'underground'. The controls were built into the front cover which could be opened for access to the underground fiddle yard. All that was necessary to move the layout was to remove all rolling stock, pull the plug from the wall socket, undo the connection between the two baseboards, and take them apart.





The fiddle yard under the station area is accessible via a hinged flap, held by special locks for camper vans. On the inside of this flap is a test track which can be used for testing locos without the need to use the scenic tracks.

### Trackwork

All track and pointwork is Peco which was purchased while travelling in the UK or by mail order. The layout still has the old Peco small radius turnouts, which nowadays causes some restrictions or the need for reconstruction of rolling stock. The main reason for choosing Peco was that the turnouts had live frogs. This enabled reliable performance even for very small engines with short wheelbases. I used cork underlay and stone ballast fixed with diluted PVA glue.

Point operation is with the original Peco point motors which proved to be extremely reliable. In thirty years I have only had to replace two out of a total of sixteen in operation!

Left  
Bogie railcar T3 with driving  
trailer in Wilhelmstal station.

Below  
Diesel V14, adapted from  
a Knightwing plastic kit.

### Extension and first exhibition experience

Five years later I moved to a new home with a long straight wall, which allowed for a total layout length of 16'2". This gave the opportunity to add another line to the other end of the terminus.

Two more baseboards were built, one with a scenic section, where the line crosses a large stone viaduct after having passed a factory. The factory has two sidings connected to the line.

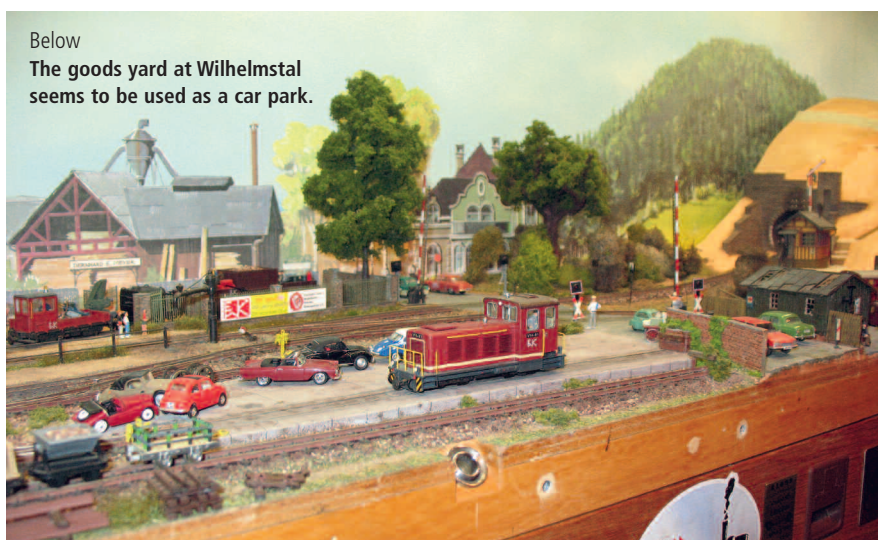
The second additional baseboard is another fiddle yard which was constructed as a big turntable (2'4" diameter) with five tracks for complete trains and fourteen short sections for storing locos and single wagons and carriages. This extended the operational capabilities of the layout a lot, and it was at this time when I was encouraged by a friend to take the layout to exhibitions, which until then had not occurred to me. It was a great experience, but in consequence some modifications had to be made to enable more spectator-friendly operation. With the original control panel in the front cover, I had to operate the layout from the front. So I took the control panel out of the front cover and built a separate box which now contains all the power supplies and controls. The whole control panel is mounted on the wheeled base of an old office chair and can be moved behind the layout for undisturbed operation.

### Baseboard construction

There is really no 'board' as the whole layout is based on a furniture-like case which has been constructed from ply and wood core plywood. This provides a rigid and quite lightweight construction which to date has resisted the stresses of several house moves and over fifty exhibitions. The joints are connected with detachable hinges and screws in brass bushes with such precision that no track joiners or adjustments are needed. Electrical connection is via multi-pole computer connectors. The rigidity of the all wooden construction is so strong that at exhibitions the whole layout rests on only two foldable wooden stands.



Below  
The goods yard at Wilhelmstal  
seems to be used as a car park.



I use a home-made capacitor discharge unit which very reliably avoids overload of the point motors.

In the hidden sections I used Roco N gauge track as this was cheaper.

## Control

Control is via a track diagram with switches at the appropriate locations. Current supply to the trains is via two vintage, but unsurpassed, Digital Gemini controllers, which have feedback and the choice of simulation of brake and acceleration.

The whole of the track is electrically divided into sections which can be switched separately. There are four main sections (station, upper loop, and the two fiddle yards) which can be connected to either of the two controllers. This gives the opportunity to operate two trains separately at any one time and follow them from section to section with the same controller.

The operation of the underground fiddle yard is semi-automatic. Trains leave the station, enter the tunnel (A on the track plan) and stop automatically at the end of the track. After a short pause the direction is reversed, the points changed, and the train reverses down the spiral into the fiddle yard. The route can be pre-selected via switches and controlled with an electronic occupation detection. When a train is called out of the fiddle yard, the points are reset and it emerges from the tunnel with the loco in front via the underground triangle. Control of the underground sections is aided by semaphore signals which show clearly whether a train may enter the hidden sections or if they are still occupied by another train.

In contrast to this rather elaborate system, the other fiddle yard, the turntable, is very simple in construction and operation. There are no turnouts and supply is only to the connected track via wipers under the turntable. No switches are needed to isolate the tracks from the main line. The turntable fiddle yard plus the sidings to the factory can optionally be operated by a third controller. This gives the opportunity for the stationmaster to get some help from another operator. The selection for this controller can be done either at its own small control panel or on the main panel at the station.

## Scenery

The scenery has a base of rigid foam which has been formed to the contours of the countryside. It was then covered with a special modelling clay (by Busch) which can be worked like wood once it has hardened. There is some track embedded in street surfaces, for instance at the level crossing or the factory yard. This was also done with the modelling clay. Before it hardened completely, the grooves were carved with the aid of a specially-converted small screwdriver.

Vegetation is with the usual grass fibres and scatters in various shades. Currently some areas are being refurbished and an electrostatic fibre spreader is used.

Trees are kits from various sources, some lichens, and quite recently a tree was made from a real Bonsai tree, which did not survive the presentation conditions in a supermarket.

On a layout just 1'4" wide, space for scenery is rather limited. Most of the available layout area is occupied by the station yard and the factory with its sidings. But both lines which leave Wilhelmstal to the right are set in a hilly area



Above  
The railcar and trailer pass the shed, where a V29 diesel is in residence. The fuel tank is a Festiniog example.

Right  
Recently the fuel for the diesels on the WEK has been imported direct from Russia. The model is a TT item by Peresvet of St.Petersburg, regauged to HOe and fitted with Bemo couplings.



Below  
Hunslet 2-4-0ST+T *Blanche* and train of Festiniog four-wheelers passing a recently-planted vineyard. The loco was made from the kit by Backwoods Miniatures.

which is negotiated with the help of tunnels, so the scenery can hide the terminal loop of the upper line and the spiral to the underground fiddle yard. At present the scenery is being improved by planting vines to create scenery typical of the area where I live. I used posts and wires made from brass and grapes from the Heki and NOCH ranges.

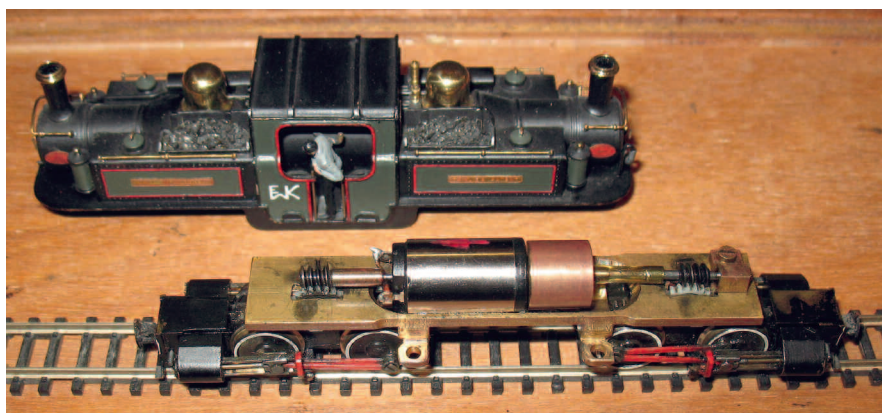




Top  
My first scratchbuilt loco, *Willi*, employed an Arnold N gauge mechanism under a body made of brass.

Above  
A modified Baldwin gas mechanical, akin to the Festiniog Railway's *Moelwyn*, on a maintenance train.

Below  
The Festiniog double Fairlie *Iarll Meirionnydd/Earl of Merioneth* was scratchbuilt and uses a Faulhaber motor.



Walls are made from modelling clay, plastic sheet, and even printed cardboard, enhanced with individual colouring.

Leaving Wilhelmstal in the other direction, the track passes under the road and behind the factory, then the river Knopfbach is crossed by a masonry viaduct. The line then disappears through another tunnel into the turntable fiddle yard.

## Buildings

The main structures are scratchbuilt from 2 or 3mm ply. The station building has a roof covered with over 3,000 separate paper slates. The walls are covered with fine sand from a sandblaster and then painted over and weathered. The diesel shed has a mechanical door shutter actuated by the engine. Windows are from clear Perspex, covered with self-adhesive paper labels and the glass apertures cut out with a fine scalpel. The roundhouse has its origins on the old layout and was re-used after heavy refurbishing. Another very striking building is the big factory: It has been wrapped as an 'art object' by the famous artist Christo. I was much impressed by the 'Wrapped Reichstag' in Berlin 1995. Due to renovating my house, I had a period of when I could do no modelling, so when I was invited to an exhibition the factory (being modified from a Kibri kit) was still unfinished. Then I had the idea of copying Christo's 'wrapping art'. If only I had known how much work this would be, I could have easily finished the factory! But the 'wrapped' factory is something special, still recognised by spectators at exhibitions and so what was meant only as a temporary art object has remained. The cloth was only fixed with sewing thread and not glued, so when there is no more interest in the artwork, the factory building can be finished in the usual way.

## Locomotives and rolling stock

The oldest rolling stock on the WEK was inherited from the old layout. There was a Bemo V51 B-B diesel, two Liliput 2095 B-B diesels, a Liliput U class 0-6-2T, and my first scratchbuilt (freelance) steam engine, No.1 *Willi*. The body was all soldered from brass sheet, the rivets punched in with a centre punch (no-one ever complained about the rivets being holes instead of heads!). The boiler was made from brass tube from an old tripod. Dome and chimney were turned on a horizontal stand for a drilling machine, using needle files. All was put onto an Arnold N gauge chassis.

One of my first whitmetal body kits – a souvenir from the UK – was the Lynton & Barnstaple Manning Wardle 2-6-2T by Rodney Stenning. Others followed, such as the GEM Talylyn *Douglas* and Langley's Festiniog *Prince*. However, I was rather frustrated by the poor running performance of the N gauge chassis. I was ready to change to O scale narrow gauge because of the bulkier mechanisms that could be built in this size and the greater weight, which I believed would result in more reliable current collection. Then by chance I experimented with the then new coreless motors (Faulhaber). This was the turning point! One after another all locos were converted, utilising a Unimat lathe and milling machine which had appeared in my workshop in the meantime. The engines now had wonderful performance, simulating weight and momentum by the smooth operation of these motors in connection with brass or steel flywheels.

Being an admirer of the Festiniog Fairlies, it had long been





Left  
**One of two Czech class 705 bogie diesels.**

Right  
**A Russian Ty2 class diesel. The figures by the crossing move when trains pass.**



my desire to have a model of these wonders of engineering. Consequently I purchased a Langley kit on one of my journeys. Alas, the performance of the proposed N gauge mechanism turned out to be unacceptable, and not only because of the incorrect wheel size. Having acquired some experience in milling and turning in the meantime, I decided to design and build my own chassis for this kit. I used wheels from a Liliput 2095 and gears from various sources, and produced a chassis with correct wheel diameter and spacing and with a very smooth performance, driven by a Faulhaber motor with a large flywheel. All was milled from brass, including the outside motion. When this chassis was finished, I suddenly felt it was inadequate to put the whitmetal 'lumps' onto it. So the whole loco body was scratchbuilt from brass and nickel-silver. Every part was hand-made; even the handrail knobs were manufactured from 0.5mm brass wire which was milled half round and then bent around the handrails. This remains my favourite engine and consequently it became the WEK's trademark.

I also discovered the wonderful range of Backwoods Miniatures kits produced by Peter McParlin – quite a contrast to whitmetal kits. The WEK soon acquired copies of the FR *Blanche* and the famous K1 Beyer, Garratt.

Modern traction can also be found on the WEK. There are diesel locos of different provenance. Beside the German class V51 and Austrian class 2095 already mentioned, there are two Czech class 705s, built from resin body kits with custom-made chassis, a freelance diesel utilising the Knightwing shunter plastic body kit, and some tiny industrial diesels, such as the fine products of Technomodel – this to mention just the main stalwarts from the comprehensive fleet.

I regard this the main advantage of modelling a freelance railway company: I can use whatever I want and like. The explanation is always that the WEK has purchased locos from abandoned railways elsewhere or copied the most successful prototypes in their own workshop.



Below left  
**The WEK is blessed with a fully-equipped workshop.**

Above  
**Maintenance staff set off to another work site.**

Below  
**Taking water we see a War Department Alco 2-6-2T.**





An articulated tramcar from the metre gauge Mainz tramway system (a Lima model) was regauged and remotorised. A diesel generator was fitted, which provides the electrical energy for the traction motors.

Passenger service is also catered for by several railcars. One of the oldest WEK diesel multiple units is the vintage T3. The model was scratchbuilt more than thirty years ago and it operates with a driving trailer. It has been refurbished regularly and is very popular with the WEK travellers.

The same variety applies to the fleet of wagons and carriages, which originate from many different sources, ready-to-run, from kits, or scratchbuilt.

The Permanent Way Department has some very distinctive vehicles which help to bring material, tools, and the members of the track gang to the work sites on the network.

Passenger service is both steam and diesel operated. The WEK is aware that modern and attractive public transport needs modern traction and comfortable carriages.

This gives just a short outline of the variety of stock on the WEK. To describe every loco and vehicle would fill another substantial article!

### Moving figures

Perhaps the most popular attraction at exhibitions are the numerous moving figures that really bring life to the layout. More than 25 years ago the first Preiser figure was animated with a tiny mechanism – long before the appearance of the



Above left  
One of the sightseers waves at passing trains.

Above  
When the level crossing barriers drop, the bystanders – and even the dog – respond when trains approach.

Right  
This hard-working fellow operates the turntable.

Right  
The water column can be swung out to align with the fillers on the locos.

Below  
The loco driver's head turns according to the direction of travel.



commercially produced figures that are available nowadays.

The turntable is moved by a worker who eagerly turns the crank and never tires. He was soon followed a shunter, standing on the step of a wagon giving hand signals to the engine driver. The driver turns his head in the direction of travel. The dog in front of the barriers at the level crossing is very popular as it always wags its tail when the barriers close – a real railway enthusiast! Altogether there are nine moving figures which add life to the layout.

### Transport

Moving a layout and all its necessary odds and ends to and from an exhibition is always a substantial task, sometimes bigger than modelling the layout itself. After the first exhibitions with all those countless little boxes and bags, I tried to improve things. I developed a system with carrying cases for the rolling stock. Foldable ramps have been attached to the layout which can take small wooden carrier boards with either grooves or N gauge tracks. Each is capable of taking a complete train (2'4" long) which can be pushed onto it without leaving the track. Heavy vehicles are secured with small rubber bands that fit into little grooves at regular intervals on the side of the carrier board. Ten of these boards are then stacked in the frame of the carrying case, and when the lids are closed the models are held by strips of foam rubber attached to the lids. One of the lids is constructed as a box which can take additional parts from the layout. Two such carriers can take a total of over 40' of rolling stock.

The layout itself is separated into its segments. The longest segments are stored in a custom-built wooden box on the roof of my car which fits on to the usual carrier systems for cars. All the rest is stacked very carefully to maximise the use of space in the back of my Volkswagen Passat estate.

### Conclusion

To be honest: there is no conclusion! I think this layout has not reached the end of its life, by a long way. It still keeps me busy with maintenance and improvements, as well as adding or converting rolling stock. There is even a second generation in sight – my youngster, Carlos, is already infected with the railway virus and sometimes even helps with erecting and operating the layout at exhibitions.

### WEK in the UK!

This year there will be a rare opportunity to see the WEK in action without the need to travel overseas as the layout will be at the Manchester show on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd October. Further details in *Exhibition Diary*.



Top  
V29 B-B diesel from the  
Walhallabahn.

Above  
Vintage diesel railcar T3 and  
driving trailer.

Below, left to right  
Transporting the layout –  
the stock case, the roof box  
which carries the main  
boards, and the back of the  
estate car, carefully packed.

I am looking forward to exhibiting the layout in Manchester, as British modellers have always proved to be most interested and knowledgeable!

For more information about the railway, see the website:

[www.wek-bahn.com](http://www.wek-bahn.com)

