

NEWSLETTER 87 : July 2020

Newsletter Editor : Andrew Chrysler

Email apc253@gmail.com

Editorial.

As we have been in lockdown for some considerable time, I thought it was a good idea to look at the highlights of our Whatsapp group. I must admit that I was expecting railway modelling to feature heavily, but in fact the mating habits of a certain tortoise has put everything else in the shade. In other news Richard reported loss of a crankpin and Jim reported a visit of his cat to the Vet. No mention was made of the tortoise's involvement in either event, but I can't help wondering if this is how tortoiseshell cats were first created.

There has recently been good and bad news... whilst Southport Model Railway Village have announced on social media that they will not be opening "until a vaccine is found", the prospective loosening of the 2 metre rule can only be good news for our hopes for a 2020 exhibition. Elsewhere, several heritage railways (which could possibly be defined as the ones having older rolling stock than Merseyrail's Pacer trains) have announced their intention to open on 4th July... so we can hopefully "scratch our itch" to some extent.

Good news also that I can finally go away for a week or two... which also means that our bedroom ceiling and walls can be replastered in our absence after the roof repairs were completed last summer. We are heading to Whitby, and the North Bay Heritage Railway at Scarborough says that they will be open so we will certainly make a visit. We have booked a caravan at Haven, where barbecues are permitted, so while it's not a footplate experience, it is probably as near as I can get in the present circumstances.

Events Diary.

All formal meetings and events are cancelled for the duration. However, a virtual club meeting takes place via a zoom conference call each Friday evening (link to zoom and meeting number sent out a few days in advance of conference call). Please be sure to log on using the most recent link to zoom as this link changes for each new meeting.

There is also a WhatsApp group. If you wish to belong to this please contact John Howard.

Chairman's Notes.

We seem to slowly be moving back towards 'normality' - whatever that is, with some of the lockdown measures being gradually eased. Hopefully we will soon be able to meet in person as a club rather than just via zoom video meetings. Even when we are all able to meet again in the clubrooms I believe that we should continue with the zoom meeting, though perhaps not weekly, since it does give us a chance to meet up with our out of town members, Malcolm, Peter and Richard.

As you will know from a note we sent around earlier, as long as you adhere to the guidelines set out in that note (numbers, social distancing etc), the clubrooms are open for business - but only for club members and not casual visitors. Those who do venture down to 57A will see a great improvement to the kitchen, lounge, vestibule and stairs. Much of the work is due to Barry and his good lady - many thanks to both of them. I understand that a start has been made in tidying up the back room which not only contains Monsal Dale, but stocks of modelling tools, scatter material, pictures and other assorted paraphernalia.

In last month's newsletter, I discussed ideas of how to improve the overall look of your layout. So following my own advice, I have been trying to improve the appearance of the model of Birkdale Palace Hotel that I have been doing for some time. Firstly, I managed to fix chimney pots (cut down biro innards) - all 80+ (chimney pots that is, not biros). Whilst not perfect, once painted they will enhance the roofscape. I could have gone the whole hog and bought 3D printed ones, but baulked at the overall price (at least £100). My next challenge was to do the guttering. This was fabricated from thin plasticard. Inevitably it is over scale. I have seen some 2mm guttering, probably corrected scale/size, but it did not look right. Finally when it rains, the water going into the gutter has to flow into the downspouts, so this is what is being worked on now. Then it is down to the painting, but even without doing that, the appearance of the building has been enhanced immeasurably.

Have you set yourself a challenge like above? If you have, let Andrew have a brief description for inclusion in the newsletter. Talking of Andrew, you will hopefully

have noted that he is our new editor for the newsletter - thank you Andrew for taking on this task. Please support Andrew and send him a surfeit of articles.

Perhaps by the time of the next newsletter, we may be able to meet up again at the clubrooms albeit with various precautions in place.

Ian Shulver - Chairman

Secretary's Notes.



I think that Ian has pretty well said quite a lot of what needs to be said above regarding the Covid19 situation., but once more I want to record my thanks to Barry and his good lady. Hopefully we will shortly be able to attend and witness the progress in person. Just one item of business and that is that one of our SMRS friends has approached the club about us working together on a portable Trix Twin layout. I will be putting

a formal proposal together shortly which will go to the club committee meeting. The cost to the club will be nothing as we have a suitable baseboard. But if anybody is interested in joining a project group for this, then please let me know.



I have been busy with my garden railway, doing a good deal of track fettling and re-alignment. And adding to the scenic enhancement. Last Saturday, Fiona and I hosted a short gathering within social distancing rules for fellow members of the Merseyside and West Lancashire Group of the 16mm gauge Association. Because of social distancing, only four could visit and they

month's Continental. Newer members will not have had the chance to get to know Allan which is a shame as he was a good friend to us and had a wry sense of humour. I never quite knew whether he was a communist, socialist, democrat, Tory or Fascist but he always had a wry joke about politicians with a twinkle in his eye and our correspondence was always prefaced with "Comrade". Once the emergency is over, Fiona my wife is planning on hosting an Italian evening for Ruth and SMRS members when we can run his Italian layout 'Tavola' in my cellar, watch an episode of the Vital Spark (as a native, Allan could understand the accent) and share our recollections of our late friend.

Jim Ford - Secretary

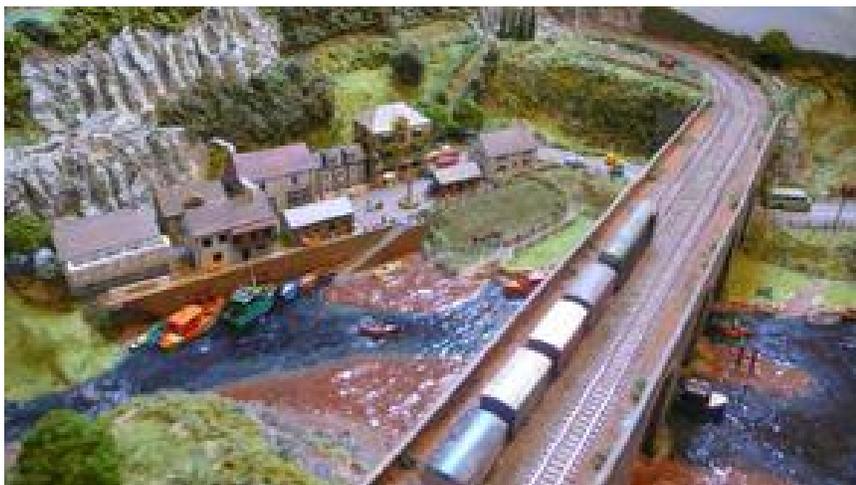
Where's Andrew?



Started by Allan, this was a regular feature and I intend to continue with setting these posers.

This month, I am on a railway with electric traction, from which passengers can connect to a Steam Railway, a Passenger Hydrofoil and even to a regular Hovercraft service.

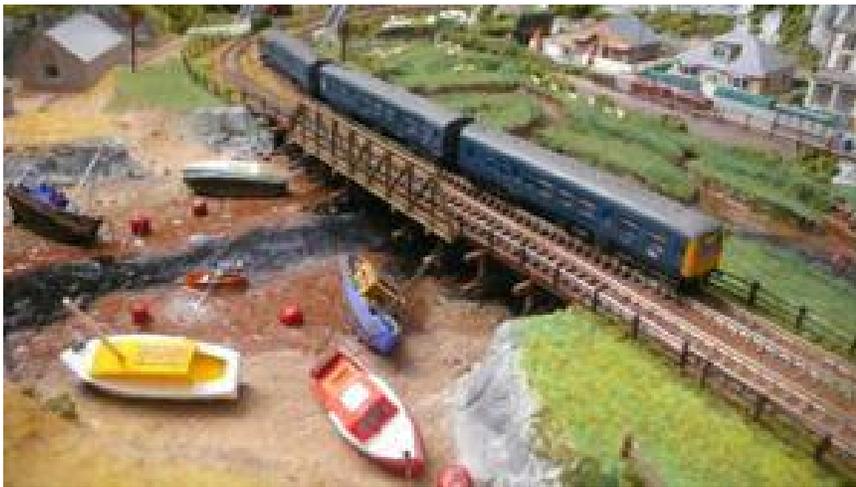
Adding a water feature to a layout - 3



John Parkinson

John Parkinson is an honorary member of the society and has exhibited his micro N gauge layouts at our exhibitions over many years. The article below was the subject in one of our earlier newsletters.

In my last article I gave my Nordseehafen layout as an example of making water with Busch Aqua, and also mentioned that I have often used Deluxe Materials Scenic Water and Jarvis Countryside Water, the latter being my favourite, although it takes up to 3 days to set. As promised, here is a photo of it on my Porth Kernow layout. I think it emphasises the point I made in the first two articles about the effectiveness of a water feature lying more in the scenery you have prepared than the actual adding of the water, which is just the last stage of making the model, the icing on the cake so to speak. And by the way I am fully aware that lots of you may know this already, -I only ever describe myself as an enthusiast who is sharing his experience, not an expert who knows more than anyone else!



The river bed on Porth Kernow, as on most of my layouts, is made with hardboard. When it had dried out I painted it with watercolour and tester-pot emulsion, very dark in the middle, going lighter to the edges. After this had dried, I added frame sealant to make the mud, as I described last time. Once

the frame sealant had hardened, which can take a few days as I wet it and brush it a bit, then let it hopefully form natural contours, I brushed on some slightly dilute PVA glue and added sand to the edges. Only after it had all set did I pour on the Jarvis Countryside Water. Then it is a matter of waiting for it to harden, and helping it to ripple as it finally sets. The boats were stuck down before I poured on the Jarvis Countryside water, so that it naturally surrounds them, (I may have used a brush to encourage this, but I can't remember. If I did, I would have washed it thoroughly afterwards!).

Once it had set, I dabbed on small amounts of white paint round the oars of the rowing boats and behind them to help give the impression of moving water. Sadly this does not really show up in this photo, but it can just about be made out in the second photo, which shows my version of the estuary and bridge at Pensarn near Llandanwg (just south of Harlech, not the one on the North Wales coast near Abergele) on my Sandside layout. At first sight, the water looks exactly the same, but it is Dapol Modelling Water. I bought it in good faith, assuming it would do the same job as the Jarvis Countryside Water. Well -it set the same, and looked fine when I took these photographs. But five weeks later, when I took it to Llanberis Slate Museum for its first exhibition, a visitor drew my attention to the white

residue which had formed all along the edges. He recognized the symptoms -he had had the same problem with a layout of his own, and had phoned Dapol to complain, been given another bottle, and found it reacted exactly like the first one. Now of course I could have explained it away by saying that it was environmental pollution or a salt marsh, but I preferred to have it looking like clear water. It took me ages to paint over the white areas and re-do them with Busch Aqua, as the residue kept on showing through! Moral of story, - don't use Dapol Modelling Water, unless you have proof they have sorted the problem.



To end on a happy note, the third photo is of the river on my Die alte Mühle layout. That was done with Javis Countryside water, and you can see the white paint I have added to show rushing water near and just below the mill race. Maybe I'll look at rocks next time, if you or the editor think that would be interesting! Until then, happy modelling!

Peat by the wagon-load

Derek Pratt



I suspect that most of us, when handling peat (or nowadays one of its more environmentally-friendly alternatives) would think in terms of one or two plastic bags, just too heavy and just too floppy to carry easily. However for one company, Bord na Mona of Ireland, the scale of operations is exceedingly large. They extract peat from bogs deep in the Irish countryside, mill it on-site to a consistency similar to that found in said heavy, floppy bags, and transport it in large

narrow-gauge wagons to several power stations, where it is burnt for electricity generation. Many miles of temporary track are laid, and frequently relaid, to carry the peat trains, hauled by numerous small diesel-hydraulic locomotives.

Until 2008 it was possible to tour some of the operations on the 'Bog Train' or the Clanmacnoise & West Offaly Railway as it was officially known. However its closure did not stop SMRS members from visiting the area twice, in 2009 and 2013. On both occasions we wandered into the Lough Ree power station at Lanesborough, where we were welcomed as if we weren't uninvited tourists just wanting to photograph their trains. For those seeking more there are books, but this is a tale of two 16mm models, one a peat locomotive and the other a peat wagon.



The loco is a perfect gem, scratchbuilt in plasticard on a Swift Sixteen chassis by Mark Haydock, a member of the Merseyside and West Lancs 16mm group. Not only is it an accurate and highly detailed scale model, but Mark also painted and weathered it to look exactly like those we saw operating. It runs off a 9v PP3 battery, and is fitted with Timpdon radio control. I acquired it a couple of years ago

when Mark was selling much of his garden railway stock, a misfortune which can happen to any of us. But I would have kept the loco, and put it behind glass as a shelf queen!



Now a model of that stature requires something decent to pull, preferably wagons that bear some resemblance to the prototype. That thought was carefully recorded on the List Of Things That Really Ought To Be Done Sometime. However without a numbered ticket for the Queue of Things That May Actually Get Done, progress was inevitably limited. Eventually a re-wheeling operation on a wagon left me with a pair of small

bogies, identical apart from one being metal and the other plastic, for reasons unknown. These could perhaps form the basis for a peat wagon. The prototypes

are made of aluminium, for lightness when being tipped 180 degrees, with steel angle reinforcement. Relatively simple, I thought to model this with plasticard and styrene strip. After a good deal of fiddling about with ruler and calculator, I came up with estimates for the dimensions and quantities involved, and with a little help from Messrs eBay the styrene angle was acquired, in two sizes. The plasticard I already had, in the form of a sheet of alleged bath surround acrylic, donated by a patternmaker of my acquaintance, but that's another story.



For once reality matched the expectation, and building a box from angle turned out to be fairly straightforward, although I rapidly learned the benefits of accurate measurement and cutting, not to mention prolific use of an engineer's square. The floor was a sheet of thin steel, retrieved from Baker's Tray No.4 (Metal Bits) - Not To Be Thrown

Away. A pair of holes were drilled for the bogie fixings, and the acrylic sides and ends solvent-welded in place. The smaller angle strip was cut to length and fitted as per prototype photos acquired on location, a pair of spare couplings added, and the wagon was essentially complete.

After painting with acrylics I wondered about the load. A wagon full of peat was a mass spillage waiting to happen, so I made a dummy floor from more plastic sheet and installed it about half an inch below the top of the sides. Dried and sieved peat substitute was glued on top, and when all was dry it looked quite convincing. A test run behind the loco was satisfactory, and the overall effect very pleasing. More wagons are clearly needed, but that's for another day, or possibly year.

For the record, the prototype modelled is a 1964 Hunslet loco No. LM226, allocated to the Mountdillon works. The model is named after the local power station (or perhaps after the lake after which the power station is named). Bord na Mona is winding down its peat-for-power operations, for both commercial and environmental reasons, so the future of its rail operations and rolling stock is in doubt. One would hope that at least something gets preserved.



It was an earlyish start at Crewe. The train had originated in London and was timetabled to be away from Crewe at 0615. We had trundled down from East Lancs Railway at Bury via Heywood and Castleton two days earlier to take up residence at Crewe Heritage Centre for our final preparations on the Friday. Everyone needed to be up and active as we had to leave Heritage Centre at 0530. It promised to be a fine day as we

progressed through Warrington and Wigan to Preston where we paused for an hour or so to take water. This involved unhooking from the train and moving to adjacent platform 6 on Butler Street Side to take replenishment from a road tanker in a car park using two inch firehose. By 0950 we were ready to run non stop to Barrow. It was a fast run to Lancaster and leaning gracefully into the right hand curve through the northbound centre road in Station then through Hest Bank with the view over towards sea before slowing for Carnforth. There was ongoing activity at West Coast's base as we took the left curve onto Furness Railway route westwards. At this point we were ahead of our timings. We slowed through Arnside, over the River Kent viaduct (it was at low tide) and onwards serenely through Grange-over-Sands and Kents Bank to Ulverston and Barrow. It was important not to be early into Barrow as our platform would have been occupied by the Class 37 hauled Barrow – Carlisle which we would be following up to our next watering stop at Workington.

We took water on the platform from another road tanker. It was at this point that things began to get interesting. I was to be the Owner's Representative on footplate from Barrow to Workington. As this was over a superb section of scenic interest and through Ravenglass I was more than happy. Haydn Fellows (the Tour Organiser) asked me if his photographer Barry Atkinson could join us on footplate. There was an ulterior motive as our progress up along Cumbrian Coast was to be filmed by a shadowing helicopter. Would I ask the Traction Inspector and Driver if something special could be organised? What Haydn did not know was that we had some concerns over coal. Usually we used Daw Mill Cobbles which are roughly the size of a house brick. Four or five to each shovel full. But we had been let down by



our coal delivery at Crewe. They brought the wrong size. Tennis ball size neither suited the air draughting through fire grate nor burnt effectively, forming for want of better words a puddle of red hot mud which dropped away through firebars into ashpan without giving up a great deal of calorific content. Fortunately the smaller coal was at top of tender with larger accessible underneath which had got us to Barrow well enough.

As we set off the day became glorious. Five of us on footplate (Driver, Fireman, Traction Inspector, Barry Atkinson and I) were fine as the cab was spacious. Barry took images, we chatted away. Steam pressure became difficult to maintain. Chris and I doubled up on firing, taking one side of the firebox each. The traction Inspector had a go but to no avail. Fortunately we had been given easy timings to avoid catching up to the 37 hauled Carlisle train which stopped regularly. In turn



this allowed easier driving and used less steam. We deliberately slowed slightly and whistled continuously through Ravenglass, over River Mite, through Seascale. Then the (unplanned) special event occurred. North of Sellafield Station it is single track all the way to the loop at St Bees. As we approached the automatic distant signal on

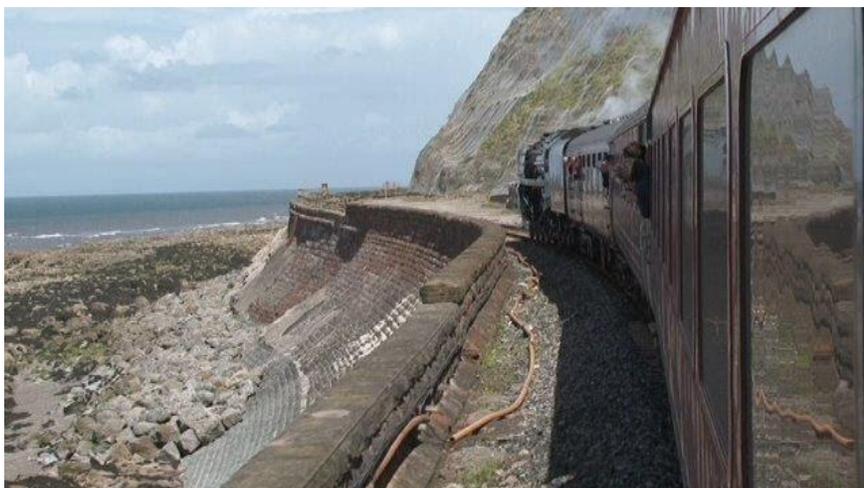
the climb towards Braystones the track circuits operated usual audible warning. Three of us got in each other's way as we reached to operate the recognition button. So the system took over and the air brakes operated. As we were not travelling fast it was more or less a normal stop. If we had been using vacuum braking it would have been possible to use the Large Ejector to blow the brakes off and continue. Air brakes do not allow this. You are brought to a stop with two

minutes delay before brakes can be released. Innovative thinking took over. We rang Haydn and told him that stopping was deliberate. We were not under timing pressure. There is a lovely sea view to our left. For the benefit of passengers we would be making a controlled "hill start". We were asked to delay for 5 mins or so to allow the helicopter to reposition. And off we went on our way to St Bees.



Instead of 10 minutes waiting for the southbound train to clear the section from Whitehaven we had 25 minutes as it was running late. Apart from our incandescent Duty Controller everyone was delighted. What happens on footplate stays on footplate. Two passengers brought us ice creams.

We ran through Whitehaven without stopping then onto more single track on the narrow ledge between rocky foreshore and sheer cliff for an on time arrival in Workington. From there to Carlisle was uneventful. Whilst passengers enjoyed the City we adjourned to what remained of Carlisle Upperby to turn and service the locomotive. When we set out from Crewe had just over 9 ton of coal of which over



5 ton had been used, most of this north of Barrow. Our 4 ton resupply was of the size required so returning south over Ais Gill and Blackburn should not present any issues.

Nothing is ever simple. We had excellent run southbound over settle & Carlisle to Long Preston for taking water then Hellifield

and on towards Clitheroe. We were on time but something in front of us was not. Over an hour was lost between Clitheroe and Blackburn. More indulgence in innovative thinking. At 5 minute notice we came off train at Blackburn. The Class 67 that brought the train up in morning ran forward to Blackburn whilst we set off to run direct back to Bury via Manchester. This was a combination of features. It

had been a very long day for passengers, we might get short on coal and water – an hour delay without moving consumes up to half of coal and up to 500 gallons water. Off we went on a high speed run through Farington Junction, onto West Coast Mainline, through Leyland and down to Golbourne, across Chat Moss, through Manchester Victoria and to Castleton. Without stopping. Green signals



most of the way. At Castleton we reversed down through Heywood, into Bury and parked up. Some of these images are Barry's and used with his permission.

2010 was a busy year. On 15th July we returned to Bristol to work some Torbay Steam Expresses and a circular trip via Lickey Incline, Manton Viaduct, Bedford, London Waterloo (using the original Eurostar platform) and back overnight to Bristol.

How realistic is your layout?

Ian Shulver

At one of our video conference meetings in May, I gave a brief talk about trackwork and what makes it look realistic. I started by saying that the rolling stock we buy is generally extremely well detailed and realistic (steam roller wheels and couplings excepted). And we would not want it any other way. But what about your track and track bed - how does that measure up against your locos and wagons?

Unfortunately most commercial track is inevitably a bit of a compromise - gauge, sleeper spacing, sleeper length and even sleeper width. Of course this can be remedied by constructing your own track to match your particular scale, era and company. However, even if you stay with a readily available product, you can make a significant visual improvement by paying attention to the track as a whole. By this I mean looking at what there is between the railway boundary fences. Although I am not going into any particular details, items such as the slope of cuttings and embankments are defined by the railway engineers for good reason, and of course many layouts have excessively steep earthworks. On either side of the track itself is a cess where rainwater drains into (how many of you have seen this on a model layout?). Then there is a shoulder to the ballast, and the ballast

size itself is quite specific - if too fine, or too coarse, it looks wrong. This is before we get into vegetation and colour gradations.

But remember, a layout is not just about the rolling stock and the parts enclosed by the railway boundary, but also the bits outside it - from the back scene to foreground, people and animals, and from buildings to vegetation. So, let us take a brief look at a few of these and see what can be done to improve this such that the axiom "if it looks right, it is right" holds true.

Buildings. I am sure that we have all bought and made some of the excellent Metcalfe card kits. But of course there is something lacking and, although you might not realise it straight away, it is of course downspouts and guttering. Just adding these, whether bought or scratch built, adds immensely to the overall impression. Also, how often have you seen these, or any other, buildings just plonked down on the layout with a heavily delineated line between the building and the ground? This does not happen in practice - buildings have foundation. Unfortunately the kits and other commercial buildings do not have any footings so it is difficult to 'plant' effectively. However, it is relatively simple to soften the boundary with some carefully placed vegetation etc.

Trees. Many trees that we see on layouts scale out at perhaps less than 30 feet. However many mature trees can be well over 60 feet high and more which in 4mm, scales out at more than 10". A few well made large trees can really enhance a scene, particularly if the general shape and foliage colour are consistent with the type of tree being modelled. There is a caveat here in that a tree of realistic height may possibly dominate the area - the problem being that most layouts do not have the depth of scenery to accommodate this. Clearly a compromise will be required.

Hedges. These are not the easiest to model and many that that I have seen are most unrealistic. The density, width and height rarely represent reality, they tend to a mono colour with no variation in texture due to plant variety, and remember hedges are really bushy trees stacked closely together. So model the trunks as well as the branches/foilage.

Animals. When we purchase a pack of animals we may find it contains perhaps a half dozen cows or sheep. But if you look in a farmer's field, a herd of cows maybe numbers 50, and a flock of sheep double that, but you can get away with just 4 or 5 horses. So, do not buy just one pack of animals, go for several - the cost will still be much less than a new locomotive or coach and really makes a visual impact. This then brings me to the look of the field. The grass is not just a

single colour, but a subtle blend of shades, and will perhaps even be non-existent near the gate where traffic is heaviest

Dioramas. These set pieces are a wonderful way to add some interest to a layout for periods when there is no train movement. However, they must reflect reality. I will give a couple of examples that I have seen (not certain if it was at Warley, Glasgow or both) that were beautifully executed but both had something (almost undefinable) that jarred. The first one was a little scene involving a crashed car that had come through a hedge/wall, across a field ending up by a railway cutting. The car was surrounded by the emergency services, there was a police car in the lane by the hole in the wall but yet there was something wrong. It was only by standing back to view the whole scene that I realised that the field was completely surrounded by a hedge/wall/fence - no gates. So how did the ambulance and fire engine arrive? Perhaps by helicopter or the "hand of God"! My second example was of maintenance on a complex piece of track close to a station throat. Again there was a huge amount of detail in the scene - work tools, high-viz jackets, workmen's vehicles and so on. The only point of issue was the Network Rail vehicle. It was positioned between the running lines. How did it get there, surely it did not come along the platform and down the ramp, nor would it have bumped across the tails from a non-existent access road.

I know that some people are quite happy to run trains, but if you do add some scenic effects, do try to make it look realistic and believable. It is not always possible to add as much detail as one would like but this will be mitigated if it looks right. I have to admit that although I try, I do not always manage to follow my mantra of "if it looks right, it is right".

Next Month.

At present, I already have part 1 of "Modelling Moor St. Station" from Richard Jones - with promises of more to come for future issues.

If anybody has more articles for inclusion, please put pen to paper (or preferably, put fingers to keyboard).

And Finally...



Perhaps inspired by Cyril Fletcher on "That's Life", I propose to close each newsletter with a "funny"... be it a cartoon, joke or poem, with a (possibly tenuous) railway modelling theme.

To start this off, I've searched "google images" for a cartoon, and would welcome contributions to close future newsletters.

Over to you, gentlemen!

Andrew Chrysler

apc253@gmail.com