



John Beers looks closely at Cleminson flexible wheelbase 6 wheel coaches.

Photo: Peter Swift

(Continued from Narrow Lines 101, page 12)

Thursday 18th April

We called on our local steel stockholders to enquire the price of aluminium angle. The storeman found us two lengths of angle, unfortunately of slightly different thicknesses. When he offered us both pieces for a fiver the difference seemed less of a problem. He also cut them to length for us.

We took the pieces home and set about constructing new cassettes, packing the thinner section to match the thicker. We finished up with two loco length and two train length cassettes. During the day our long distance member from Southampton arrived to spend the next few days and the exhibition with us, and about 8.0.p.m we decided to call it a day and retired to a local hostelry to review progress!

Friday 19th April.

We took the layout to the Exhibition Hall and set it up, then went back and screwed the last couple of pieces of wood to the fiddle yard and took that as well.

When we connected it all together - IT WORKED!

Saturday 20th April

On show for the first time as part of the Association Stand with a prominent sign "Layout under Construction". A lot of interest was shown by non-modelling members of the public, most of whom said they didn't realise what work and materials were needed to produce a layout - also a lot of modellers who said "We've got that far too!"

No construction actually took place but the points and operators were fine tuned. Under operation it became obvious that an extra section was needed on board B in the platform side of the loop. Fortunately, because we have no board to board jumper cables, only panel to board, and the original section spanned both boards A and B, there were already separate wires from the panel to each board. So.....

Sunday 21st April

As a small demonstration of the electrical construction of the layout I drilled an extra hole in the main control panel and fitted a DPDT toggle switch, split the two wires for the section where they joined in the panel and fed the one from board B from the new switch. This switch was then fed from the busbar of each controller in the panel. Three 6" lengths of wire, three soldered joints, three screw connections, one switch, one hole, job done. I wish it was always as simple.

Saturday 27th April

After the previous week's rush nothing was done during the week. On Saturday three of us set about checking and adjusting the cross-board rail joints to ensure that the layout could go together in all the forms intended. One section of track had to be relaid completely and now needs ballasting.

The only cross-board connection powers the fiddle yard from whichever board is adjacent. The sockets for this are missing on the branch on board C and need fitting so that board D does not have to be connected.

Attention was then turned to the fiddle yard. Boards which already existed were altered to fit around the fiddle yard to give the yard operator some privacy. (We can also retire here when things go wrong, to hold our heads in our hands!). The boards also serve to advertise the layout name, the Group, and the Association, always providing that the layout is working to a standard that we can admit who we are!

Sunday 11th May.

Very little work was done in the last fortnight, mainly because I took the week-end off to operate 12":1' scale narrow gauge in Porthmadog, and I had taken the workshop keys in my pocket! So three of us set about installing the necessary sockets and wires to board C

After some discussion with other group members it has been decided that a second entrance on the fiddle yard would be useful, further from the front of the board and square to the join between it and the next board. With a short conversion board this will give more scope for extra modules as the "Ekoms Moor" exit and entry positions limit the modules to an S shape near the front of the layout on a four foot length. This was also put in place and wired, through a switch so that only the correct fiddle exit would be live depending on the form of the layout in use.

I returned to Porthmadog in the evening until the following Thursday, so the next time it all goes together will be at the Convention.

Saturday 18th May - Convention

The layout's second exhibition as a "layout under construction", this time in its long straight form, not a L. There were no problems due to the form of the layout except that the operators who had familiarised themselves with the L shaped format had to adjust to the erstwhile branch becoming the main line and vice-versa. This was because the layout changes shape and priorities, but the control panels remain the same. The decision was taken to have a couple of meetings for operator training to alleviate the problem.

Another minor problem appeared during operation with regard to the engine shed sections. If a loco was parked over the first section break on the shed road it made a short circuit when the point was thrown against it. This was due to using a live frog point for section isolation. The cure was to cut the rail close to the frog and introduce another switched section so that any loco parked clear of the fouling point of the shed road was clear of the short section which contained the point frog. So.....

Saturday 25th May

The extra section was made in the shed road. Wires were connected to yet another switch in the control panel and a wire was run from the panel to the appropriate board. Threading the wire into the main harness was tedious but made easier by the use of spiral wrapping to cable the wires together.

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We also fitted stops to most of the sidings. This was deemed to be one of the more important jobs as a certain grey bearded group member had driven a loco over the end of the layout at Derby. It wasn't my loco and it had only just returned to the layout after having been judged best narrow gauge exhibit. Fortunately the damage was relatively easy to repair and the loco returned to the layout later in the show. It also demonstrated the importance of switching out sections not in use.

Saturday 1st June.

We still had a problem with a short circuit on the engine shed road. One of the members drew out a full rail diagram of the troublesome area of the layout with all the breaks and feeds and it all became clear. The short happened when the points into the freight sidings were set to give access to those sidings. This changed the polarity of the frog and the rail from it towards the shed, but only as far as the join between the baseboards. There are no cross baseboard links, each board being fed direct from one of the two control panels. At the board join the shed road reverted to common so when a loco was bridging the join it connected a positive feed to a negative return; hence the short circuit. The solution was to make a break in the rail a couple of inches past the frog, and wire the rail from the board join back to the common return collector at the baseboard feed sockets. This does not cure the problem, but has moved the position of the meeting of opposite polarities to a place where a loco is foul of the points if it bridges the gap and therefore shouldn't be there anyway!

The rest of the afternoon was spent making boards to fasten the baseboards in pairs, face to face for ease of transport and storage. The boards were made identically in 4ft by 1ft pieces of 10mm plywood, with holes bored to clear the dowels on the baseboards, the outer faces being varnished and lettered with the layout name.

Saturday 8th June

A blazing hot day!. Half a dozen of us met and set up the layout in the garden, and spent the first couple of hours in a training and explaining session as one or two of the group didn't quite grasp the switching and driving methods needed to ensure prototypical running at exhibitions. It looks as if I shall have to write down some of the basics and give a copy to each of the group members.

At this point the heat of the sun began to cause short-circuits

due to rail expansion. Running was therefore abandoned and in deference to the temperature chilled beer was voted a better bet than hot tea!

Attention was then turned to the scenics. The platform area was built up with thin ply to just above rail height and faced with cardboard. The site for the station building was cut out of the cardboard to avoid the dreaded black line when the building was in place.

Another round of beer was brought out and a discussion ensued which resulted in the decision to add a 2ft by 2ft extension baseboard, with turntable, fed from the platform road, to enable the single ended railcars to be run prototypically. The turntable is to be manually operated by rods and gears and volunteers to build this extension baseboard were sought and found.

Saturday 16th June

Only two of us today. After a bit of tidying up the layout we decided it was too hot to work and decided to drive to Ashbourne to see the hypothetical site of the railway. We visited Aflow water mill, where the building and cottages were little altered, and over a welcome pint decided we might build an additional 8ft module featuring the mill after the main layout was completed.

Later that week Board D was taken to Gresley to have the scenic profiles fitted to match "Ekoms Moor", and was returned about a fortnight later. Due to work commitments and holidays there will be no more Saturday meetings until the end of August, but occasional free week days will be used to further the work on the layout.

Wednesday 17th July

The scenic profile boards were fitted on the edge of board C to match board D. The messy bit then started. Expanded polystyrene foam was glued to the boards and carved to the required ground levels. This was then covered with a layer of nylon type material which had been supplied by one of the group members. The whole lot was then coated with 50:50 diluted PVA to fix the surface.

The basic ground level around the factory area was topped with a layer of cheap polyfilla equivalent coloured with poster colours as insurance against chips of brilliant white as the layout gets the inevitable knocks and bangs with use. All tried and tested methods for scenery so far.



Amberley Steam Gala 1996: Ex-Dinorwic Hunslet ALICE (780/1902) having just arrived at Brockham station awaits the signal to run round her train.

Photo: Philip Moss