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THE MODELLING SECTION

Peter Marriott

ALPMATTEN VIER



Above: A BLS Re 4/4 draws a gravel train into Alpmatten. Below right: A BLS 465 awaits its next turn at Alpmatten.

Photos: Peter Marriott

This compact layout made its public debut at the 1998 Swiss Railways Society AGM at Stevenage. In comparison to the superb metre gauge Letchworth Club layout at the same event it was positively dwarfed! The layout appeared in its extended form at the 2001 AGM.

Because there are so many interesting Swiss railway locations and companies to be modelled my layouts tend to follow general Swiss practice rather than specific locations. I must confess to having a soft spot for the BLS and SBB 460s hence the majority of this layout is standard rather than narrow gauge. This is my fourth Swiss layout and as with all the previous diorama/layouts it carries the name of Alpmatten. The first two layouts were based on the Furka Oberalp; a test diorama (displayed at the York 1991 SRS AGM which is now owned by Alan Pike OBE) and a continuous circuit compact layout. Next came a larger SBB/BLS

standard gauge continuous run layout that was taken to the Bristol SRS 1994 AGM.

The layout was built to be portable for possible exhibition use and can be carried in a medium sized car e.g. Vauxhall Astra. The two baseboards each measure 1.2 m x 0.38 m. With the lights, rolling stock etc in the car on the day of the Altrincham AGM it became apparent that when a third board is built I will either need a bigger car or hire a van to move the layout!

The project combines both standard and narrow gauges using the familiar "end to end" format. It can provide simultaneous running for two locomotives - one standard gauge and one metre gauge. The standard gauge track comprises of a "hidden" siding at the rear of the layout which leads to the bay platform and to the main running line moving past the station through countryside and on to a siding at a BLS AlpTransit works. A small section of Bemo metre gauge track runs in and out of a

small tunnel. The tunnel is just long enough to hide one locomotive.

Alpmatten 4 endeavours to represent a Swiss typical rural location with a wooden chalet station, numerous coniferous trees, tunnel entrances and a short station (with a bay for a single car unit). Ready-ballasted Fleischmann Profi track has been used and has proved to be reliable – just be careful not to allow adhesives to seep into the point bases! A Gaugemaster transformer and hand-held unit (HH1) control the trains via multiple feeds and a small control panel built by my father.

Trees are by Heki and Architrees from Chicago, USA. The catenary is Sommerfeldt. The station building is a FidesPress kit. The BLS AlpTransit works is scratch built using Wills plastic sheets.

Thick card formers were used for the contours of the scenery. These were filled with crumpled newspaper and covered with Mod Roc cloth. When dry the cloth was painted with acrylics and poster colours. Two layers of scatter material were then added with slightly watered-down woodworking PVA adhesive (Evo Stick or IKEA). The second coat was better quality scatter materials such as Woodlands Scenics, Heki, Set Scenes. Further texture was added from the Woodlands Scenics and Heki foliage and undergrowth ranges. The taller

grasses are by Woodlands Scenics and Set Scenes. The rock faces were made from Tetrion shaped with fingers and an old kitchen knife. The rocks were painted when dry adding some dry brushing to give the finished rock faces a little depth.

I like the FidesPress range of wooden kits. They make a welcome change from the more familiar plastic kits. It is just a pity their product range is rather limited. They are available from the *Swiss Express* advertiser Great Little Trains of Kenilworth. The basis for the station building is FidesPress kit 1140 which is the post office at Saanenmöser. The kit included detail castings, signs, glazing etc that I have supplemented with station signs, timetables, posters etc left over from plastic kits. The wood parts were painted before assembly - I used watercolours and acrylics. The station building was illustrated on page 42 of the September 1997 issue of *Swiss Express*.

Signals are still to be installed on the layout. The rolling stock is a mixture of Roco, Lima, Liliput, Fleischmann, Märklin and Bemo.

Dave Howsam was responsible for the building of the extension to the layout. He telephoned me in December 2000 to ask if I would like to bring Alpmatten to the Altrincham AGM. I didn't have the heart to tell him the layout had retired to the loft so I just got on with building the additional board instead. It took about two months.

I've just started to build a layout based on the Austrian, Swiss and German borders near Scuol-Tarasp so the layout is now up for sale to make way for this larger project. If anyone is interested in purchasing Alpmatten Vier please contact me on 01908 550780 or by email at:

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