

Modelling Switzerland? : Michael Farr discovers that there is an alternative

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Modelling Switzerland?

Michael Farr discovers that there is an alternative.



Train approaching Woody Bay double-headed with "Isaac" and L&B "Lyd" (replica 2-6-2T built by Ffestiniog Railway) during September Gala weekend 2014.

Photo: Michael Farr

One of the joys of old age is the huge increase in health insurance costs when travelling abroad! Plus living in Cornwall where I do, it is quite an expensive expedition to reach an airport hosting suitable flights. Realising that in future I am unlikely to make a pilgrimage to Switzerland every year, I sought a new challenge for modelling. I think I have found it in North Devon in an area often advertised in the early years of the last century as "Little Switzerland". That area centred on the Exmoor towns of Lynton and Lynmouth, and when the twin towns were linked by rail to the national network by the Lynton and

Barnstaple Railway (L&B) in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign, the architects plumped for a Swiss chalet style for its three most important stations. These were Lynton (for Lynmouth), Blackmoor Gate and Woody Bay, the centre of operations of the resurrected railway. Here I thought, I could use any skills I had learned in making models of Swiss station buildings, and use local materials. Apart from these thoughts prompted by increasing age, Peco had just announced they were to produce models of L&B coaches and wagons, with replica locomotives becoming available from Heljan, a package I reckoned should be a little cheaper than importing foreign outline models.

Family holidays after the war were spent in Bideford or Barnstaple, and near one of the B and Bs we had used in the latter town I had spied some narrow-gauge rails embedded in the road at a former level crossing. This spurred me to find out more about the L&B, which had closed in the mid-1930s. So I persuaded my parents to spend a day of our 1952 holiday exploring the remains of the line. Armed with my Kodak Box Brownie camera I took a full roll (only 8 negatives!) of rather fuzzy black and white photos. Later I even bought some kits to build L&B wagons, but I then came under the spell of the 3-foot gauge lines of the Isle

Prototype Woody Bay station building.




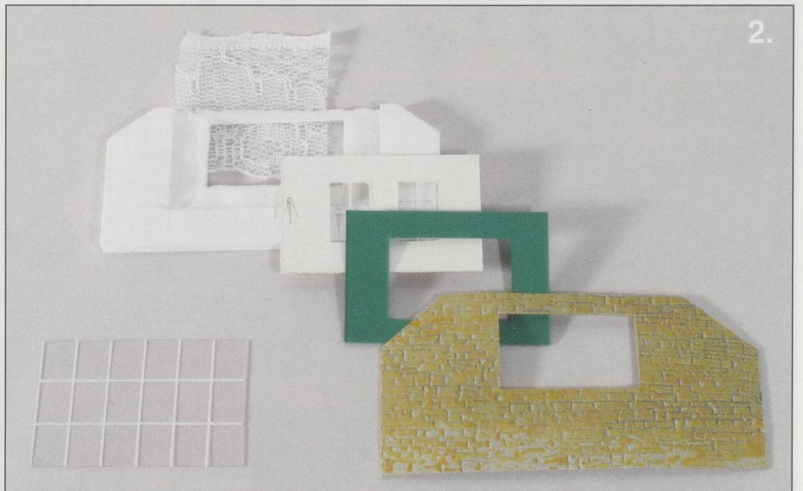
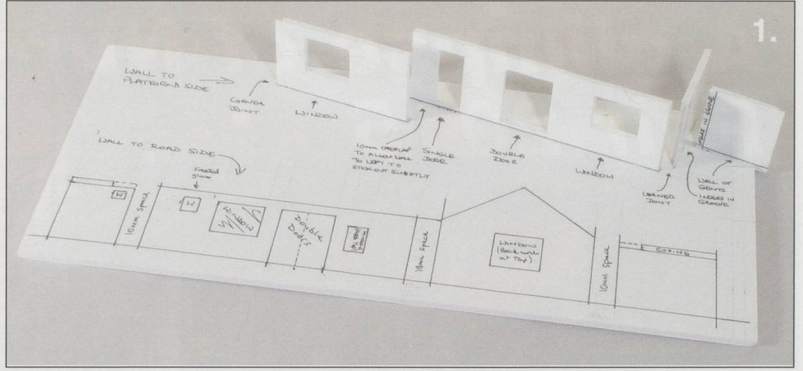
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of Man; whilst my first Swiss holiday and discovering the joys of the MOB was still forty years away.

Fast forward sixty years and I again found myself at Woody Bay. The building was just as I had remembered it and certainly it had a distinctive Swiss feel. I took out my tape measure, notebook and camera and bought a copy of a wonderful book of plans of the L&B's rolling stock and buildings, the life's work of dedicated supporter Stephen Phillips. His plans are far more accurate than I could produce and so I used them as a basis for the main station building I then set-about constructing.

Wall construction was with 3mm foamboard covered with Redutex self-adhesive embossed stone and tile material. Foamboard, a sandwich of high-density foam covered with thick paper, is easy to work and quite rigid but I recommend cutting away the outer or inner paper covering to form a recess to take the clear window plastic. This was the first time I had used Redutex sheets which, despite being more expensive than printed finishing papers, look most realistic, are easy to cut and if warmed can be bent at 90° angles. The window grids and chimneys were from Freestone Models' Scene Setters range, and the posters and signs specially made for me by my son Grahame who took images from the net and reduced them to fit the poster boards. The second floor walls and roof components are quite complicated to cut out, so I first made cardboard templates from a cereal box carton and once happy with the fit I drew round this onto 0.040 plastic card which with care, can be scored and bent along the ridges. A full description of constructing this model appeared in *Railway Modeller* in November 2014, illustrated with photos taken by Jolyon Sargent at the Peco Studio. I have subsequently completed models of the outbuildings, which will hopefully feature in a future article in R.M.

If you are in the West Country this year I can thoroughly recommend a visit to “Little Switzerland” to ride on the revived L&BR. At present it offers only a very short journey but they have plans to expand to a new main station at Blackmoor Gate as well as relaying track towards Lynton. Such a line is seen to offer a boost to tourism in North Devon and there is much support locally for the extension of the line. Whilst in the area the original water-ballast worked funicular opened in 1890, that still links Lynton with Lynmouth, 500’ below, is also worth a visit. 



1. Front wall drawn out on foamboard.
2. How to inset windows in foamboard, also demo of Redutex stone material.
3. Interior of ground floor.
4. Finished model.

All model photos: Jolyon Sargent, courtesy Railway Modeller.