The final stage will be to lay the track, allowing an overlap each end and wire in the bus, droppers and Tortoise motor. All of that can be done at the bench and then the completed module dropped in place. I'm really hoping to finish the lower level loops this month and then the real stuff will begin.....

I have been asked on a couple of occasions about the alignment of the traverser, so here's a little more detail.

Alignment of the traverser is quite simple, but does work. I am reviewing the actual alignment of the bed itself as for a traverser to work correctly it must be perfectly parallel and square in all planes. This may not

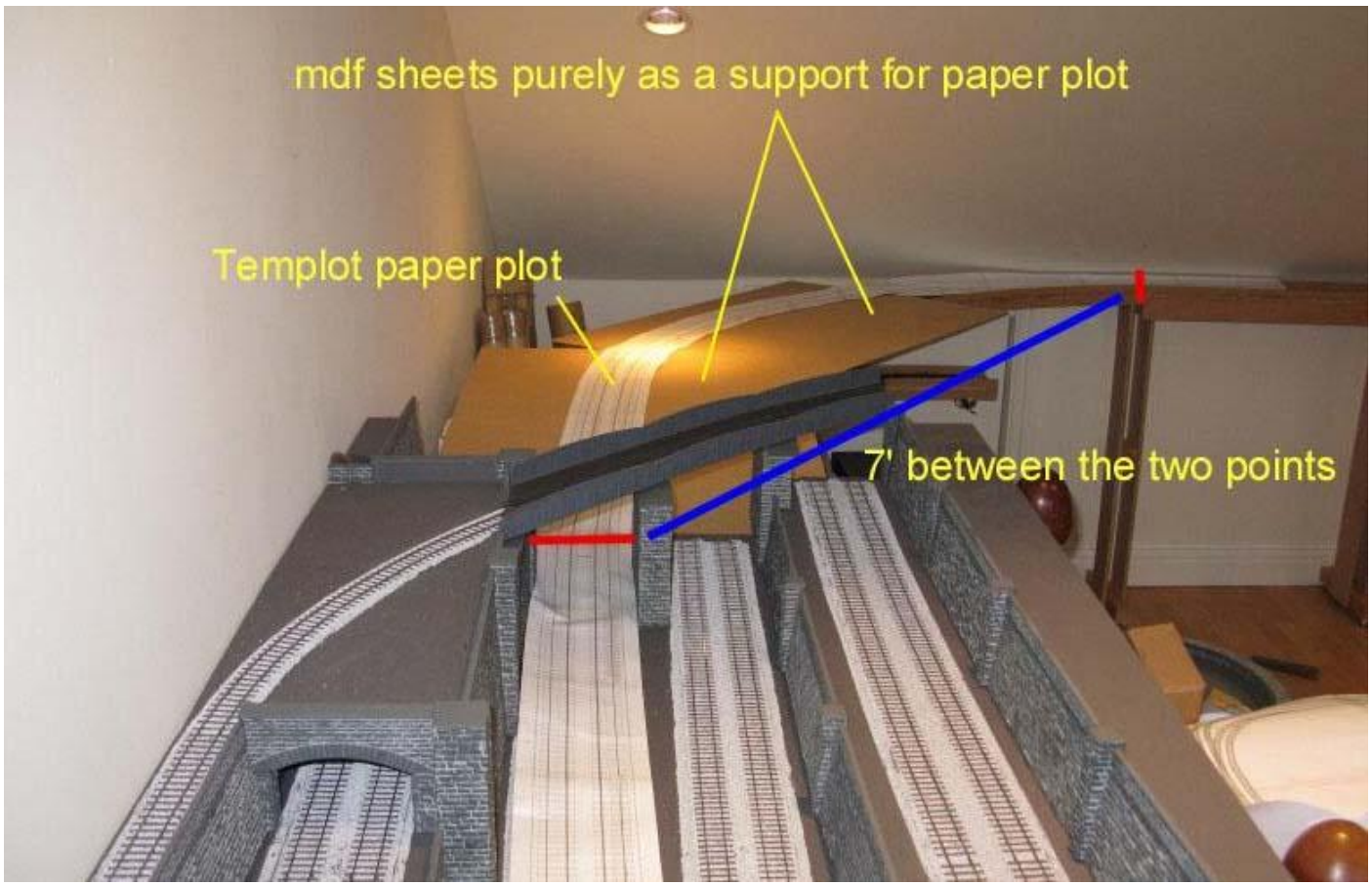
be such an issue with smaller devices but this one is 9'6" long and has a bed 2'6" wide. My original design only had one in road and I found it virtually impossible to move a bed 1'3" back and forth from a central road and still retain alignment. The longtitudinal alignment was reasonable but float in the runners and inaccuracies in construction meant it was hard to maintain vertical alignment. Changing to two inroads reduced the movement in each direction and improved the situation. A little packing under some of the rails and an increase/reduction in height of the under rail screws before soldering the rail ends, solved most of the issues. Each end of the bed has a machined hardwood L section. To drill the alignment holes, the track was laid and each line aligned in turn. Once clamped firmly in position, a 6mm hole was drilled through the hardwood rails from the top plate. To lock the table in position, all you do is slide the bed across to the required track and then just drop in a 6mm stainless pin to lock it. I will make one eventually, but a screwdriver is being used at present....😟

The 500mm drop from the terminus to the traverser bed is where the spiral comes into play. With a gradient of 1:100 minimum, I had to have a spiral of 50m in length, hence twice around the room to climb 500mm...

Today was also a landmark for me. I've been rewiring and upgrading the bus connections on the spiral so have incorporated a DCC Specialities Circuit Breaker and solid state reversing module. This work is now almost complete and so I'm moving onto the next stage of construction. The only main board that has reached an advanced stage of construction is the one over the stairs, so this has been built and moved into place. Of course I now have a spiral and a main board sitting seven feet apart and have to join them together. Even though I had designed the whole plan in Templot, this was akin to building a bridge from both sides of the river and hoping they meet in the middle. Every so often thoughts of "what if it doesn't join" have been entering my head and I have broke into a cold sweat just anticipating the issues.

Last night was spent printing out the various templates and sticking them together as normal. I had to fabricate some simple supports to hold the paper flat over the 7' gap and it was with some relief that I saw both ends come together. Phew!

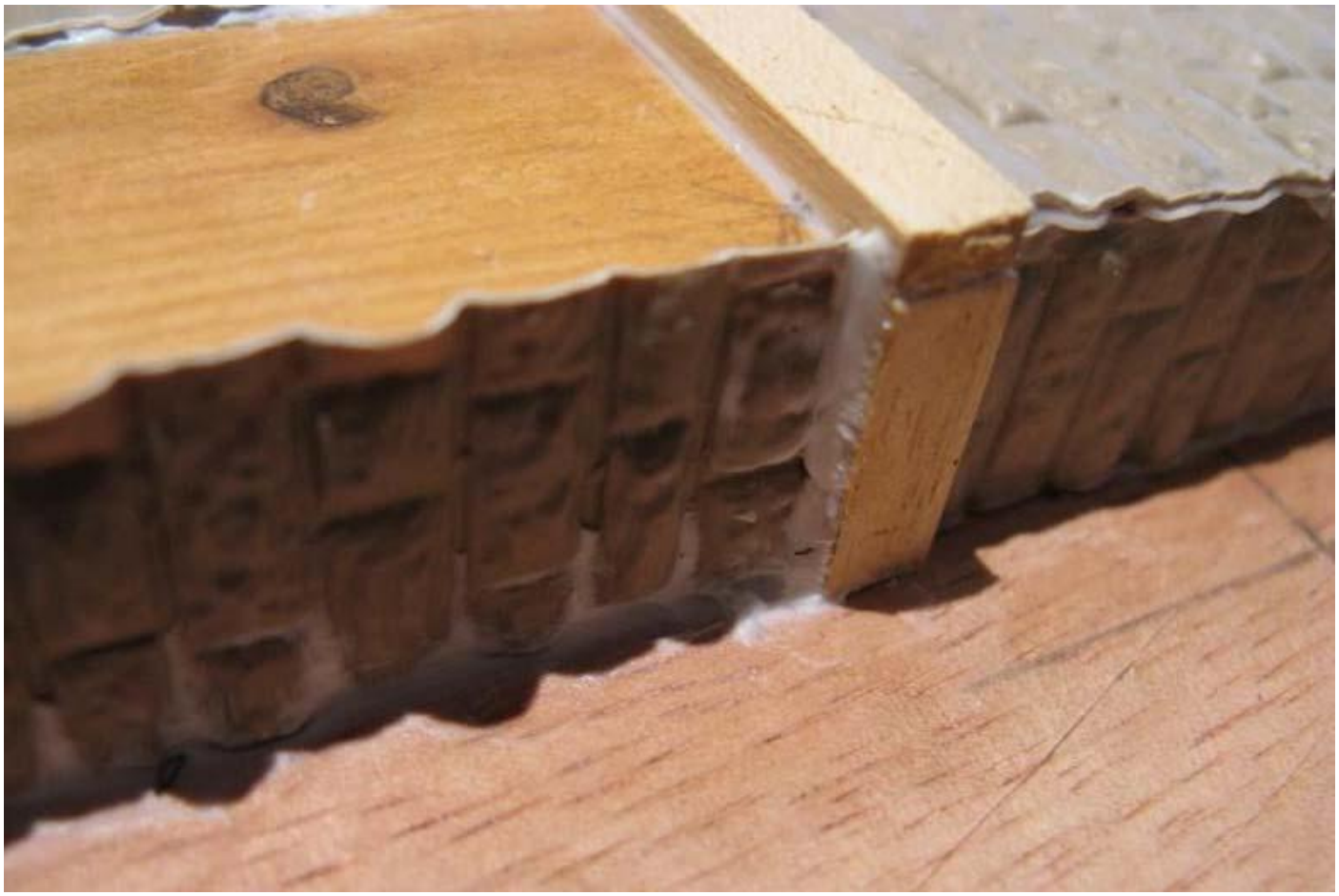
Thank you Lord!

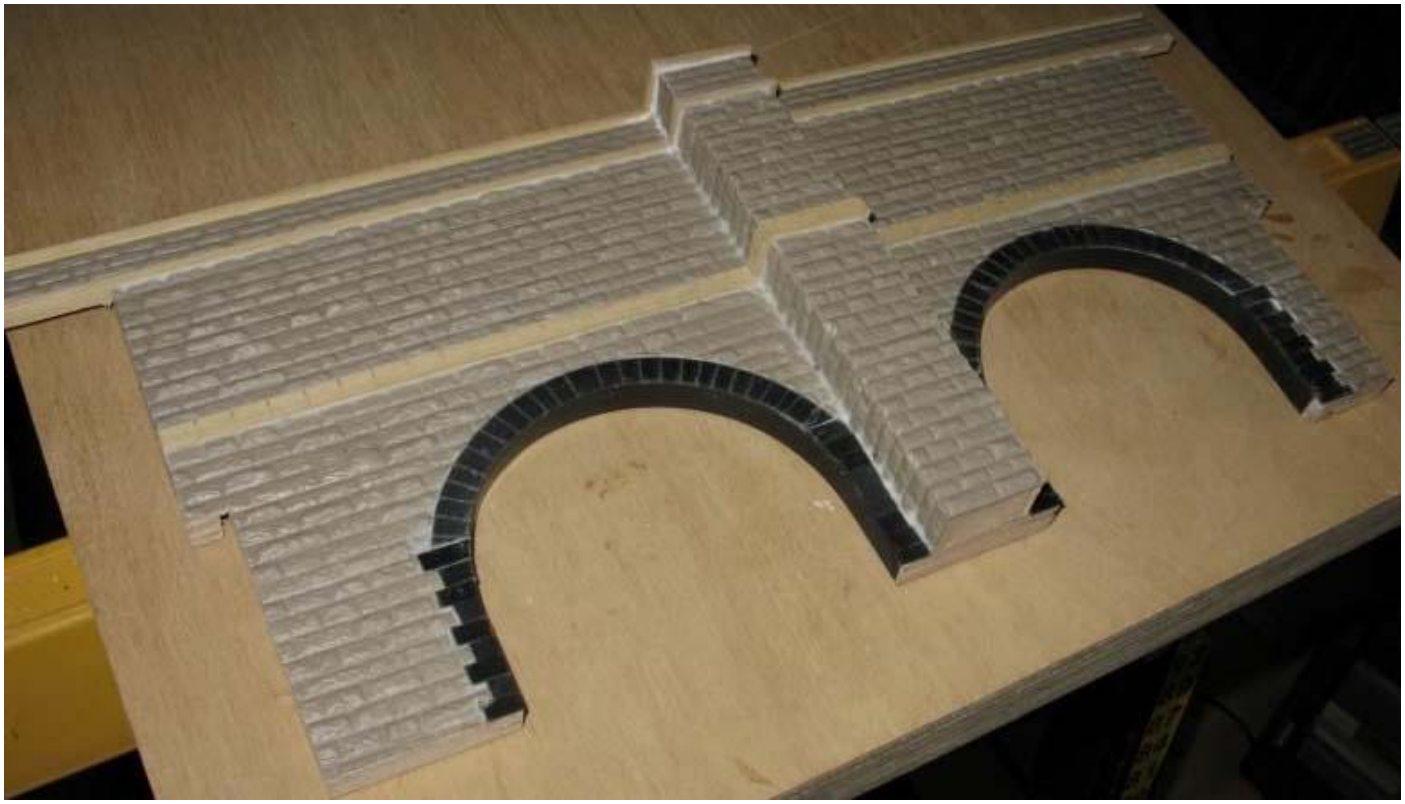


Another month nearly gone, but progress has been made. A new board has been constructed using my normal method of 12mm ply dual beams and 12mm open plan track bed. Once again Templot proved its worth as plans were printed out and stuck down with photomount. Once dry you just wheel over one of those wheeled wallpaper strippers that puts loads of holes in the paper. Slop on some neat PVA and stick down the cork strip. Add some droppers, spray the track bed with red oxide primer, then paint all track with dark brown paint. Add Woodland Scenics ballast and job done.

Next stage was to build the four track tunnel that will take trains to the lower level storage or around the folded eight. Once again, my usual method. Cut out the shape from 12mm ply and use a combination of smooth black and embossed stone Plasticard. Once complete paint the whole wall light grey and once dry, dry brush the dark grey over the top. The final stage yet to be completed will be to add smoke and water staining.

I was feeling quite chuffed when I had finished so cracked on laying some more track. I was horrified in the morning though, as I had not allowed for the overhang of coaches on the curve nor the height of US box cars, should they be run. In the end the only option for me was to slice across the tunnel mouth and build a whole new section. Running a bench saw just under the string course gave a nice clean cut, so a new lower section was built and then mated with the top half of the original.....Happy days.





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Now I've completed the tunnel mouth and have the track and track bed laid, the next stage is to add wire droppers and finally paint and ballast the track. My build method has several major differences to the norm. Because of my confidence in Templot and trust that it will all come together, I'm building modules one at a time, which are linked together as we go along. One of the major benefits of this order of construction is that you get a whole variety of jobs every few hours, rather than having weeks of woodwork, followed by weeks of tracklaying and finally an eternity of the most tedious job ever, ballasting!

I know there have been many articles on ballasting via the diluted PVA method, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get acceptable results. Thankfully Capt Kernow came to the rescue and I'm now a happy fella with no fear of ballasting, in fact I enjoy it.

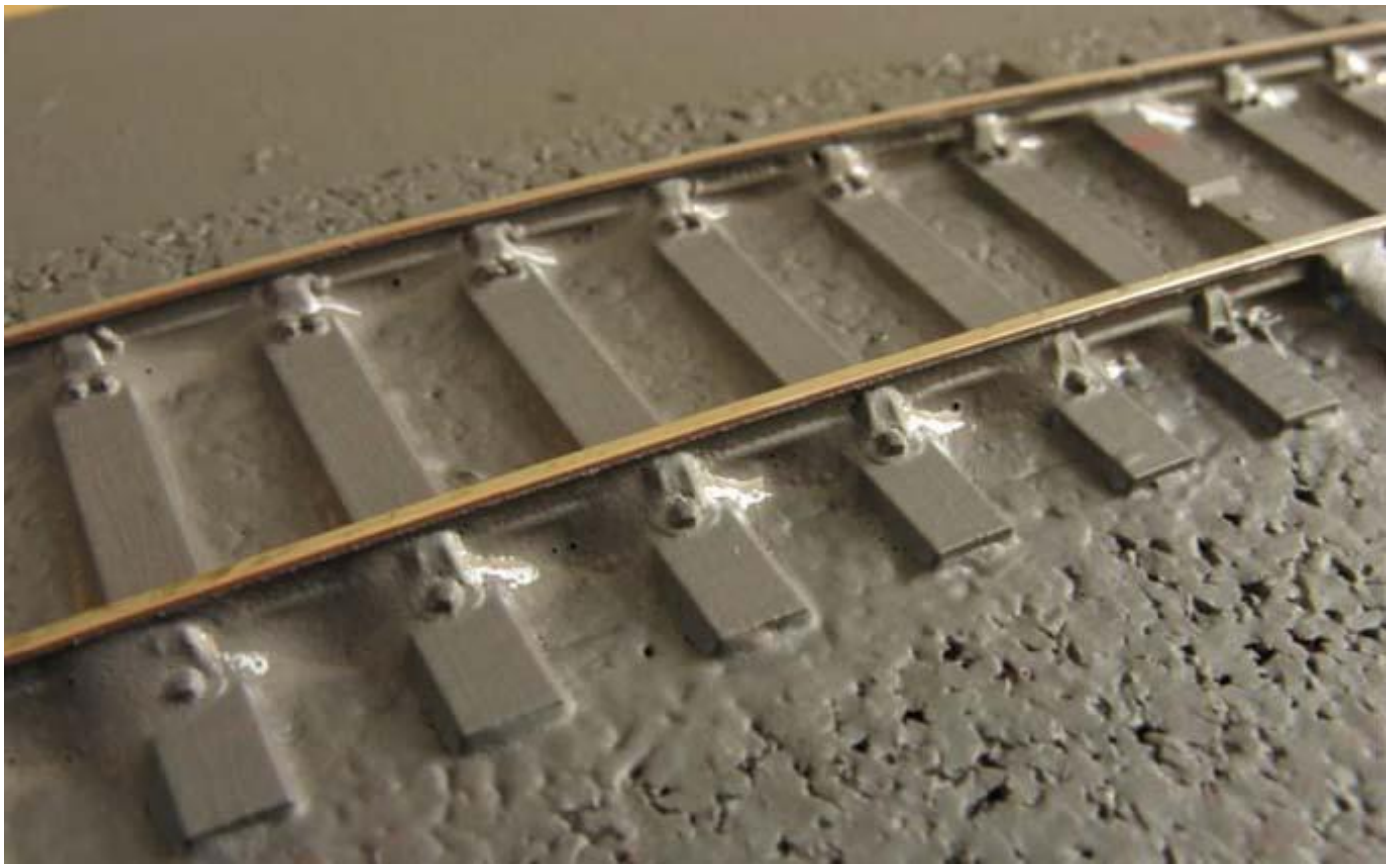
The Capt's method is totally different to the norm and really suits my way of construction. You can sit down at the kitchen table and achieve a very good result with a glass of wine in hand and some relaxing music in the background. Last night I ballasted both of these boards using this method in 1hr 40 mins. There's about 8' of track in total and that's on par for my speed of this method. 4' an hour may not sound a lot, but once done, it's finished.

So here's the process in pics.

First stage. Spray all track and base with red oxide primer.

I add droppers to every piece of rail as I go along. Rather than solder wire directly onto the rail, I'll cut out one sleeper and replace it with a pcb one. Soldering the rail in essence adds a cosmetic chair and the wire is then soldered into the same cosmetic chair. Not perfect I know, but once the rail is painted and ballasted, the electrical connection fades from view.

This pic is slightly controversial, in as much some modellers believe it is sacrilege to mark the rail surface in any way. I've found that scraping the rail surface literally minutes after painting, easily removes the paint from the rail surface without marking the rail. The secret is having the end of a metal rule at a very shallow angle to the rail and not applying too much pressure. A quick vacuum up of the scrapings and on goes the rail colour.



As explained, I'm actually using a dark brown emulsion paint. Be careful not to put too much on your brush as nooks and crannies can fill with paint, but most will be hidden once the track is ballasted. As the paint dries these large blobs of paint will normally contract and disappear, but don't worry too much as ballasting will hide them. Strangely enough I find the slight filling around the chairs captures the way oil and timber preservative can often be seen on older trackwork. The paint in this pic is still very wet and the amount of infill will reduce dramatically as it dries.

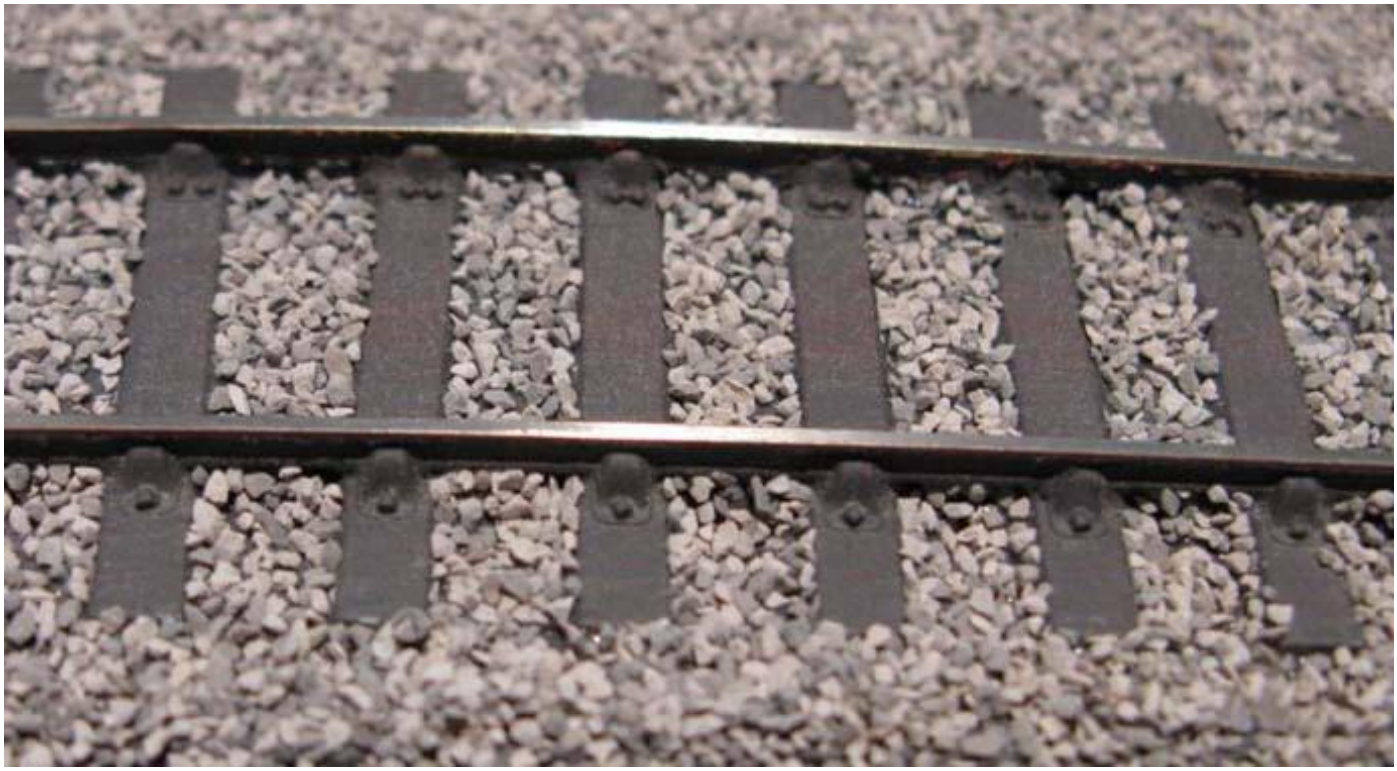
Next stage is to mask down the sides of the cork trackbed, about 10mm from the edge and add a second strip covering the end of the sleepers. This will create a useful shoulder to retain the ballast when we come to do the centre and edges later. Liberally paint on neat pva and sprinkle the ballast in place. After about 20 minutes or so, peel away the masking tape.

Now the fun begins. Pull up a chair, pour yourself a drink and relax. Take a small paint brush and dip it into a pot of pva and paint a good dollop between the ends of each sleeper.

I do about 12" at a time and then sprinkle on the ballast. Repeat that process on the other sides. The beauty of this method is that you don't have to wait until the mix goes off. It's just a continual process.

The final stage is to do the middle section. Same process as before.

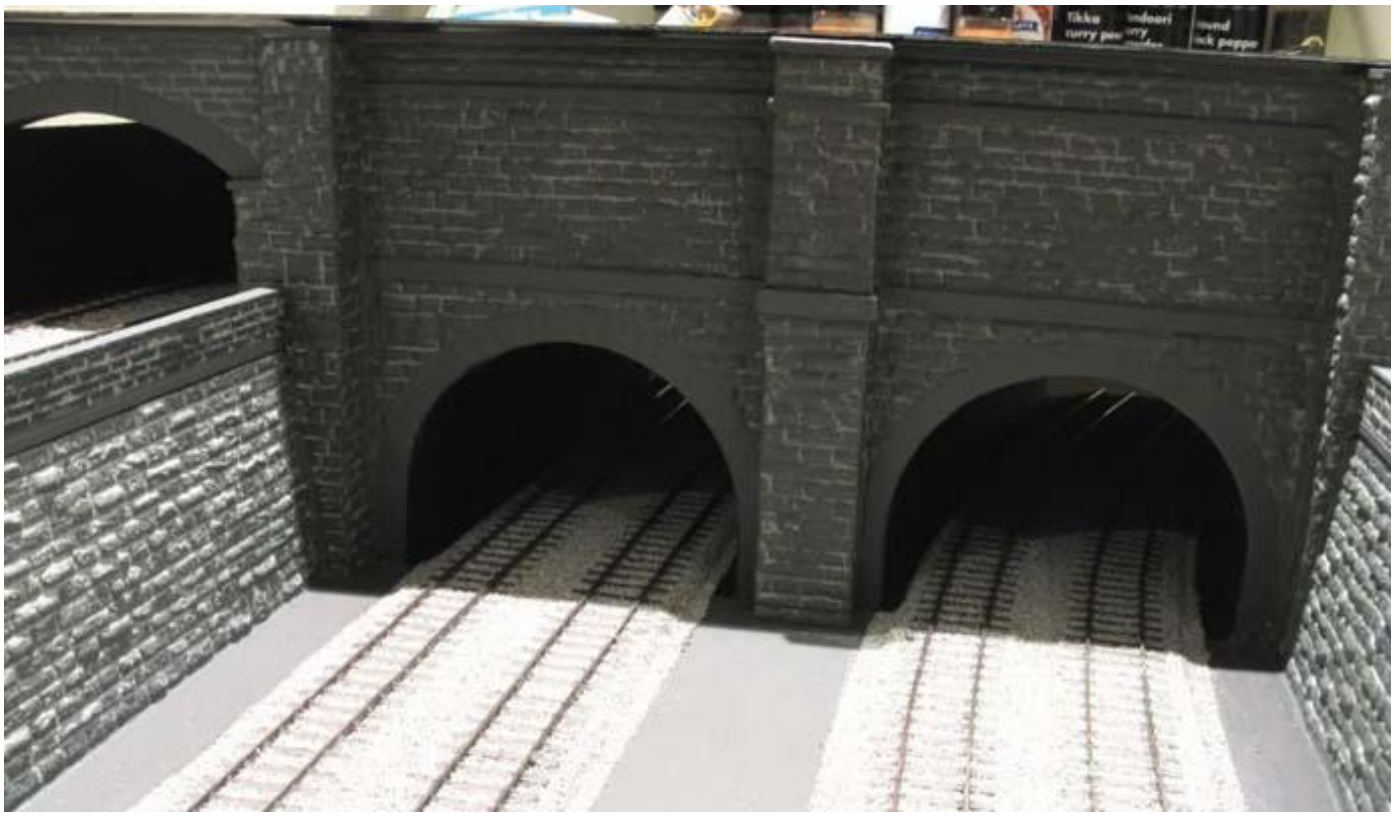
On with the ballast again and job done.



So there we have it. There's no right or wrong ways of doing any of these jobs and this is just an alternative method to the norm that suits my construction methods.

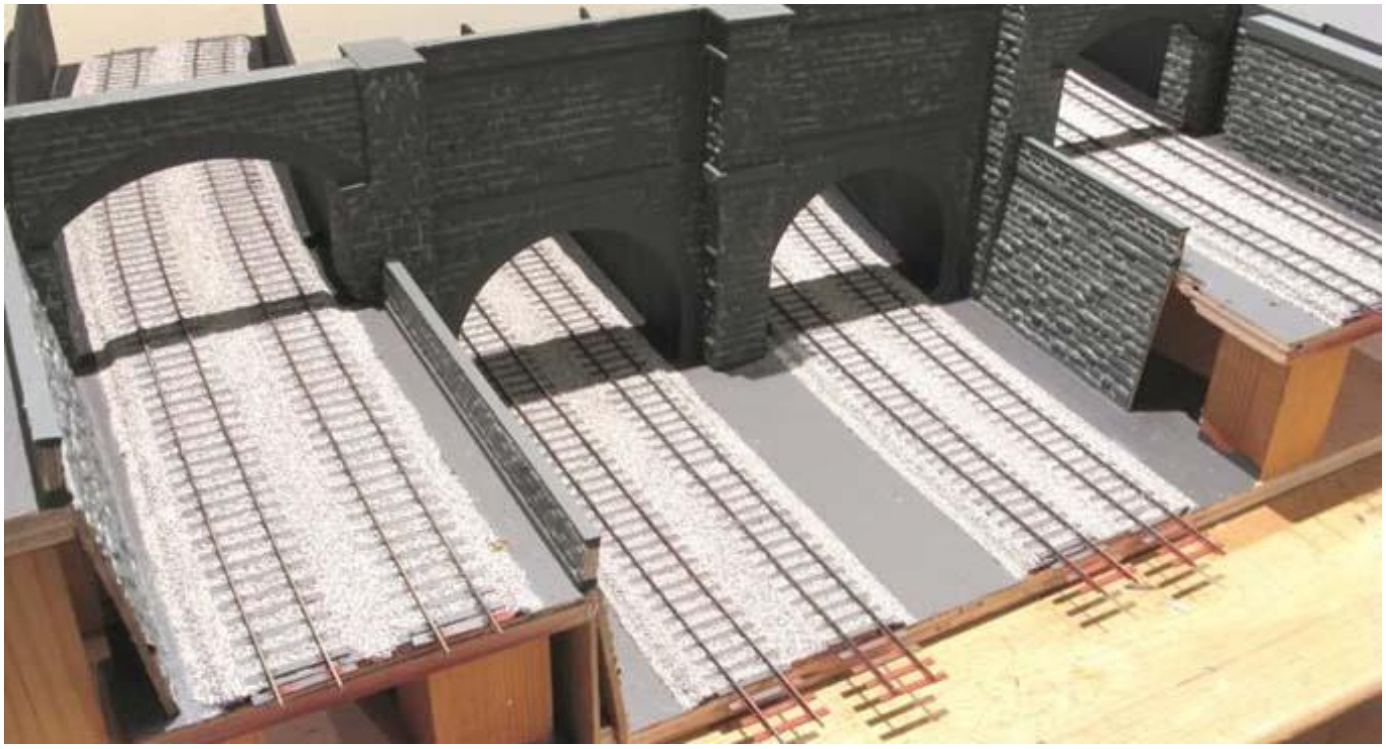
I'll never qualify for the speed modelling Olympics, as this one little board has taken just over two weeks to build....but it's been a very enjoyable journey.

This board will sit on the end of the first one I have built and will take the main running tracks down to the lower level and around the folded eight. From the front, reading from left to right, the pairs of tracks are as follows. The raised pair on the left are the second half of the folded eight. The two lower tunnels are on the left, one part of the folded eight and on the lower right the lines down around the spiral to the low level traverser. The final pair of tracks on the upper right are the main running lines up to Eastwood Town terminus, which will sit over the top of the these tunnels.



Construction has followed my usual methods with 12mm ply forming the main structure and track bed. The rest is mainly 2mm mdf sheet either covered in embossed Plasticard stone sheet or painted matt black to form the tunnel walls. I have yet to build the tunnel roofs, so have just laid some black Plasticard over the top to give the effect. Ultimately, I want the tunnels to be black and dark inside, so I will probably spray the ballast in the tunnel with a dirty black finish.

I hope these pics will you give you a bit more of a feel for what I'm hoping the finished layout will look like. Still a lot of weathering and water staining to do on the walls, but progress is being made.



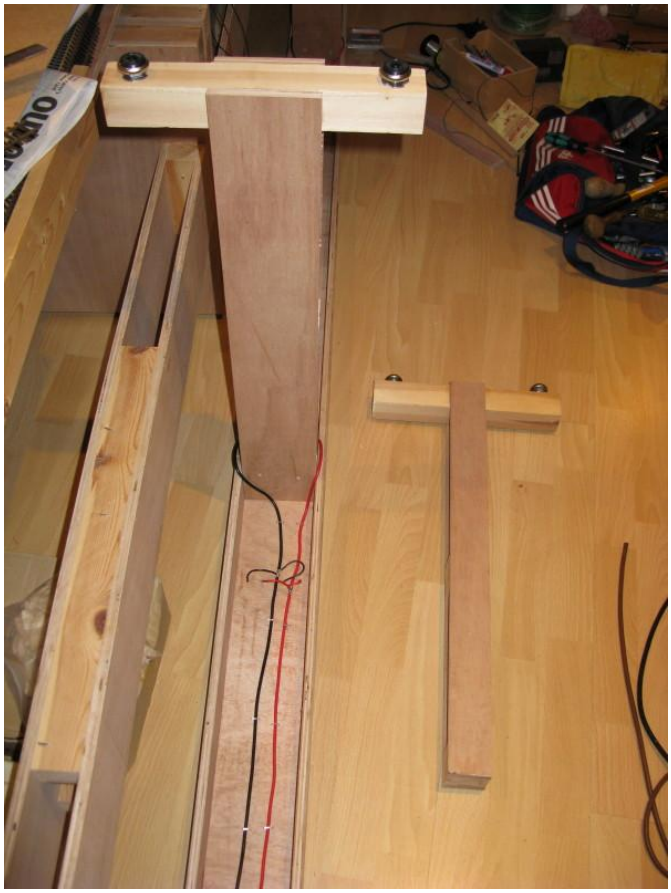
Finished off the tunnel board last night by making the top cover which will eventually become the car park for Eastwood Terminus. Shutting all the light out of the tunnels has really made a difference, although I have made this cover removeable to simplify track cleaning or deal with the dreaded derailment. There shouldn't be any on plain track, but sod's law says if it happens, it's always in the most inaccessible place....

Next stage will be to design a removable section to connect the spiral to the scenic boards. We have a hatchway about a foot from floor level which gives access to the first floor loft space. When the plumbing was done access was not an issue, but now clambering under the spiral boards to access the central heating pump, has shown it is likely a

plumber will not want to negotiate the boards or more likely will and break something in the process. Better to bite the bullet now whilst construction is easy than wait for that dreaded day and discover we have a real problem. So back to the drawing board....

Why is it photos show all those gaps that you didn't notice during construction?....

As you can see the spiral is a somewhat unusual construction. These very narrow boards sit under and behind the main scenic boards and I came up with this idea to make access as easy as possible. The open plan boards are in essence made up as I beams and with side rails on both sides of the track bed, they make a very rigid and flat track bed. The double track bed is 130mm wide and the single as used in the reverse loop, just 80mm wide. As you can imagine these would be very unstable so the legs were designed as a T shape with a 300mm cross bar made from 50 x 50, which is drilled to accept two adjustable feet. The legs sit inside the side supports and the track bed is screwed into 50 x 50 blocks with three screws. Although it is more stable at this point, it is not until several of the I beams are screwed together, does it become one rigid loop.



Of course the legs can move slightly from side to side if singled out, but once all the adjustments have been made to ensure both feet are firmly in touch with the floor, the whole thing sits well and as yet, no problems have been encountered at all.

Hopefully these pics will help.

For those of you that have followed this thread, you will know that I managed to purchase a set of ECML buildings from Great Northern who was breaking up his Peterborough layout. Having been built by Alan Downes, they would be ideal for my layout, other than they are of brick construction and I have used stone walls for the tunnel areas I have built so far. This won't be such an issue with the main terminus board as that will only use the Downes buildings and it sufficiently far away, so as not to cause a massive contrast. If anyone asks, I can always say the original line was build many years before and used local stone. As this became more difficult to source and subsequently far more expensive, the operating company chose to build the new terminus buildings and surrounds used conventional brickwork.....