

## ***Andrew's Musings Part 12***

So I'm almost up to date with progress 15 years on. The final module under development is one for Matthew. With all the boys, he is the most keen, so I felt I needed to get into doing something with him as well. However I'm going to leave that until next time, because there's a few additional track sections that have been built over the years to compliment the layout, which I will describe in this article.

The first of these are 4 small 90 degree corners. Harking back to the very first article, we went for the inner line being 360mm from the back so that if one wanted, you could have a couple of semi circles of R1 and R "1½" track to link two modules back to back to have a little layout of your own at home. Given my layout has expanded beyond the point of the triangular one described yonks ago, I took up this idea so that I could work on just a few modules but have some trains running in the meantime. It was getting depressing having all these trains packed away. Initially I built the R 1½ corner from combinations of standard track pieces (24230s, but also 24115s and a 24094 at the 45 degree midpoint) to bring the radius in closer to the 64.3mm gap between lines. However in practice the two lines got too close at that midpoint, such that the passenger carriages could hit each other if two trains passed each other at the same time. I have now changed it by dremelling some track to size, so now it is a smoother and wider corner for the trains to go around (but still 64.3mm at the end plates).

Talking end plates, they are not the usual 610mm wide. I have made the plates smaller so they are reversible, for either "normal" or "inverse" use. In inverse mode, the plates need to be short so the standard steel bolt from the next module doesn't get in the way. I probably could have done it differently, but it is what it is – the important thing is it works!

It works if I want to make an oval layout facing outwards. It also works if I want the layout to face inwards from the walls and therefore needs to be inverted, with my two dogbones at each end (the Swiss mountain scene and Matthew's to be described next). Actually, just thinking about it, I could make an inverse oval with the scenery facing inwards and the trains going around me while I sit in the middle . . . something to try out sometime.

I'll come back to the corners shortly, but the other couple of track pieces are a DB maintenance facility and two small joiner modules for easy transition between our modules and those of Wellington, Christchurch and the original Auckland ones. These joiners have trailer plugs as part of the alternative spec, the track at the correct location for both ends and the end plates made to correspond with the landscaping of the two types of module. At 260mm each in length, they don't take up a lot of room and are an easy way to join us up with the others when the time comes (we did it once down in Wellington 7 years ago).

Then there is the DB maintenance facility. In an earlier article, I expressed my frustration with the range of ICE sets with different functions, but especially the special couplers they have which are difficult to pull apart and are easily broken. You just want to keep the train in one piece, but that makes it difficult for storage and getting it on the track without damaging the couplers further. I built some home-made storage tubes but needed a means to transfer the train from these to the layout. A siding which had a slot for the tube to sit in. I don't need another module, but if I'm going to have something then at least scenic it up appropriately.

So what's appropriate for a long passenger train on a siding? Why is it not doing its job? Because it is having one of its scheduled inspections. I need a long maintenance facility. With appropriate other railway paraphernalia (stacks of rails, sleepers, catenary poles, wires), this would provide another different module for the audience to look at. I had a broken fluorescent light cover, which I cut up to create windows, the result of which with the LEDs shining through from the inside looks quite effective for a modern engineering facility. Now I just need to link this in to the rest of the layout. Somewhere I needed a switch on a module to get the trains off and on.

Initially I went down the 64.3mm route, with the facility having an inbound line and a second outbound line for use at home. That's not much use at an exhibition though. Hey, then there is the Loreley Tunnel triangle, which has the inbound and outbound combined to interact with the inner line. That's a possibility, except that module has a lot of other uses besides that, so may not be available for this purpose. Which brings me back to the four corners . . . what if one of those had a triangle built into it?

It now does. I managed to convert the R1 ½ curve to include two points to get the trains off and onto the mainline. This can connect to the maintenance facility (or anything else for that matter – a full staging yard for instance). It does mean my small corner isn't quite so small anymore, but this has given me the opportunity to finally find a place for my favourite castle Neuschwanstein, high up on its rock. The castle is only half the size it should be and is rather "cardboard" but hopefully once I've finished surrounding it with trees and other scenic elements it will look the part on a European layout. The trees will be in a range of autumn shades, using some plastic ones that I got off Barry, which I will sprinkle with foliage to take the plastic sheen off. Should look quite spectacular then!



So that's some of the extra bits sitting around downstairs to compliment the layout – 4 corners, a maintenance facility and 2 joiners that may get used one day. One last thought though before closing and that was my mention of the Dremel. It's probably become my favourite tool, because out of necessity or creativity, I have had to modify a number of buildings, bridges, tracks and other things over time. I just have to constantly remind myself that the high-speed cutting surface that I'm close to will do the same to my finger or eye, so ALWAYS wear safety glasses and ear muffs for noise. I probably should do the same in terms of masking . . . we have a few more of those around home in more recent years 😊.