

Andrew's Musings Part 8

I'm trying to think what came next. There are two possibilities, the port scene as eluded to several articles ago, or the alpine scene – another of my ideas from items I've picked up along the way. I'll start with the port.

I had at least 3 reasons for creating a port scene. Firstly I needed somewhere for my quarry to deliver its product to and an inground dispensing hopper and conveyor belt that I had picked up seemed to fit the idea of delivering it to a ship. Secondly I'm into modern passenger traffic, so when it comes to freight trains we are talking container wagons, railyards, gantry cranes, wharves etc.. It's also a different scene from everyone else's modules and gives a reason for freight trains to be moving around the layout. There's opportunity to create more interaction with the audience with a range of industries on display. The exhibitions were in real need of a fiddle yard (before we co-opted Glen's modules to the task), so a port scene could provide this while still being interesting scenically. And it gives me a go at modelling water and boats and wharves (inspired from Phil Wrigley's home layout with the siding along the wharf). The plan is also when it isn't part of the "exhibition oval" it can form an extended front to my terminus station making the combination a fuller sized 3.66 x 1.22m metropolis.

So my port scene has a couple of configurations. For my own purposes, I wanted a yard on the inside line for rearranging the containers, which could easily get itself across to the outside line to deliver the containers to the wharves and transport them back from the ships. To do this smoothly, the modules turn 60 degrees to the left at the transition point, which avoids having S bends if it was just straight. I like that – not being straight – because it means you don't get the whole scene in one view, but have to go around the corner. In saying that, most of the track and buildings on the modules are very straight and parallel to each other to make it look engineered, purposeful and industrial. Just something that I have observed – if you want natural (like a grove of trees), do things a bit randomly with an ODD numbers of items. If you want an industrial look, make it straight with an EVEN numbers of items (for instance my dam on the module described a couple of instalments ago. I went for two downflow pipes – could have gone for four - possibly too many, but three or one didn't feel engineered – it felt odd 😊). However just back on the 60 degree turn, it doesn't make it particularly useful when part of the exhibition layout with the corners being 90 degrees, so for this reason there is a second configuration where the corner can be taken out and replaced with a straight section. This make the port scene 3 modules long with the yard on the inside line only (no transition).

I'm still working on these modules (as well as all my others). At the moment some key scenes are in place with more to come in between . . . I have a bad feeling that 3 modules won't be long enough. The first scene on the left is the thing that inspired it all – the train comes in to where the ship is awaiting its load from the quarry. The load gets dispensed into the hopper and up into the ship by conveyor belt (activated by the audience) as the train slowly moves past along the full extent of the wharves. At the other end there is a bunch of warehouses, one of which has a worker moving a pallet jack to and from a train wagon (once again activated by the audience). In between is something I am especially proud of. A gantry crane I kit bashed out of two Marklin Startup transfer stations. It is loading a container ship (well the bow at least) modified from a Systema plastic box. The crane has flashing lights to warn off low flying aircraft (thanks to Clint for making them for me, since as I mentioned I'm a bit nervous on that side of things). Admittedly the crane should be about 50% higher if it was to be true to scale, but it already looks imposing enough across the front of the modules. I'm yet to try this out at an exhibition, but the crane can be manually operated by the audience . . . it is fairly sturdy but does need to be treated with some respect (ie: don't purposefully try to break it)!

As mentioned, the far side of the modules from the audience is where the container yard is in operation. There are 5 lines in total on the layout – when at home this translates to the line along the wharf and 4 in the switching yard. At an exhibition (with the transition corner replaced with the straight section), this translates to having the 2 main lines through the middle (inside and outside). Off the inside track are 2 sidings and the wharf line coming off the outside track. I'm yet to fully plan the back area with its container transfer cranes and possibly some Faller trucks running around, because I also need to have a good number of containers stacked up, fit in a neat looking rather large old industrial building and various other things to complete the scene (refuelling depot, oil storage tanks etc.). One thing that is in place in the far left is a siding off to a concrete plant. Yes I work in concrete, but the inspiration for this came from seeing some Marklin cement wagons about 20 years ago in Wellington. I really liked the full spherical shape and the detail with it, as shown in the picture. Finally there is a place for these wagons to deliver their load on my layout.



All that being said and I still have a number of boats (a tug, maintenance barge with crane, a smaller merchant vessel and a passenger ferry) to try and fit in somewhere across the front and the idea of someone fishing (with the seagulls taking a keen interest). That's the plan . . . well it was until I realised that by creating a 30 degree turn and an extended straight to the modules, I can make the 60 degree configuration into a 90 degree turn which fits with the exhibition oval! I now have a lighthouse kitset to go onto a rocky 30 degree foreshore and the straight section will allow me to create another Systema boat, this time being the stern end of a large ferry loading up with vehicles on the top deck and train carriages down below (obviously I've spent too many hours waiting to take trucks and myself across the Cook Strait).

Just one comment about the water, which is something I wanted to have a go at. I cheated! I was reading a modelling book from the 1960s back in the day when there wasn't the range of stuff that we have today. It said to use Perspex as a means to create a flat reflective surface. Okay, you experts will not be impressed, but it has given me the effect with no mess and will survive transporting around the place. I can always come back to it in the future if I want to take it up a notch, but in the meantime I'm happy and most members of the public won't mind.

Lots to do, but some good progress was made during lockdowns on some of the kits. Scary to think these photos are from two years ago. I really need to get on with things.

- 1) A local passenger ferry, which was originally going to be on Dominic's layout but more about that in a future article.



- 2) The buildings on the far right, with the warehouse next to the train line having the moving worker. Also the maintenance barge and crane. Note it is low tide with all the barnacles showing on the wharf piers.



- 3) An overhead view of the worker . . . the mechanism is meant to work via small magnets, but I goofed up and heated up the magnet . . . not good! I have changed it to being on solid wire. Visually not as good but more reliable.



- 4) The underside before I "melted" the magnet when trying to make it stick to the belt on a staple.

