

Assembling plastic wagons kits - Easy does it.

By Alan Lancaster

There is a very adequate range of plastic model wagon, kits without having to resort to more complex etched brass or white metal kits. For my money a plastic kit can be put together to equal an etched brass version. As for white metal types, I think twice before turning to them, even if it does fill a gap in the range. The problem with white metal is its fragility. Plastic kits are more robust for their weight, and because of their weight advantage a larger number of them can be hauled without straining the couplings or the loco ! Additionally, weight can be added in the form of either small steel weights or lead sheet - know any roofers? - or even the scrap from building your last loco, if you're into that sort of thing. More on that later...

In my case, being a post - LNER, early British Railways North Eastern Region modeller, my first target on the shelf is the range of Parkside kits, more recently also with the range of Red Panda kits increasing, I will buy underframe kits and perhaps a cheap R-T-R body with the aim of producing a vehicle the easy way. Red Panda and Parkside are good both for beginners and for the more advanced modeller. In terms of quality I would say Red Panda have a good head start on the others.

As extras I also buy metal buffer heads or complete buffers, like M J T's range of sprung buffers, but with the intent of just using their blackened heads and reaming the holes through on the kit buffer shanks.

A point of advice here, though: I would recommend the use of a 0.5mm drill bit at the smallest, or 1mm largest. The former excludes the thickness of the shaft behind the head and would make the head stand out further, not a good idea with sharper curves on your layout.

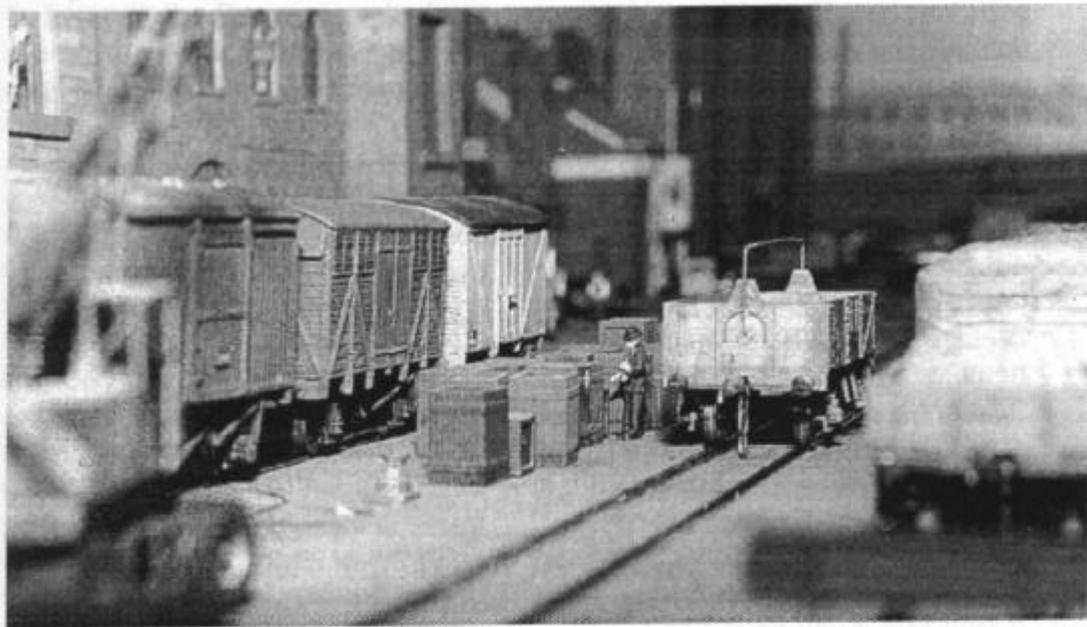
Also in the way of extras - at least for a more realistic approach - I recommend Smiths LP1 etched brass 3- link couplings for unfitted and LP5 screw link couplings for fitted vehicles. If you can get them in your area still, though, try for the Jackson Screw couplings; although these have been out of production for a while, they are worth their weight in etched brass for durability.

Further, some items such as brake cylinders look better cast in white metal.

They're under the vehicle, unobtrusive and safe from breakage. Brake levers are available as white metal castings but unnecessary. If you consider the quality of plastic mouldings the white metal castings are redundant.

Whatever your imagination or experience tells you would look better in materials other than provided with your kit, go with it, and the end result should please your own sense of aesthetics. The end product, after all, will be seen by you and anybody you associate with in your hobby very regularly.

Like some food and drink, it will either grow on you or turn into an object of dislike, so prepare the model well.



WagonFest ! A real mix of wagons here with representatives from Coopercraft, Parkside and Bachman. All have been detailed and weathered to the same standard to present a nice uniform appearance. Notice the Spratt & Winkle coupling on the open wagon, see the next issue for details of how these are fitted.

At the risk of this reading like some sort of instruction for novices, as the instructions on the kit tell you, clean the sprue of ANY flash. A set of Swiss files will only set you back a fiver or so, but you'll than yourself time and again for the investment. It saves patience, and supplements the block of fine sandpaper for bigger mouldings. When the model's part assembled and you find you've got a part that won't fit because the bits around it look like sausage meat, you'll kick yourself and there's £3 down the drain.

Read the instructions twice over and look at the diagram(s) that come with the kit. If you've put the same wagon together before this is just going on a bit, but some of you may not have had the brainwave to do your own wagons or coaches. Believe me, not only does an early success bolster a soggy ego, it also makes this hobby cheaper.

Get a good adhesive. Bottled M E K from Slaters is a good bet, and use an old but still reasonable small brush to apply it with, to BOTH surfaces. This is like selling insurance to accountants, but don't be afraid to USE the fluid, liberally in places, sparingly in others. Large load bearing surfaces need a brushful, but don't flood it, the stuff works like solder and too much will ruin the mouldings, "melt" them, so to speak. You need to achieve a welding effect between longer surfaces, and the same rule that applies to soldering is as effective here, let the fluid do the work, "capillary" action will allow the M E K into small spaces or slight gaps, with a little judicious pressure.

Remember also, that whilst the adhesive is still in the solvent stage parts can be adjusted into position until you are satisfied about the accuracy of edges and angles, etcetera. Once work is considered suitable at that stage, place it in a

safe place and allow to dry, preferably on a non-plastic surface so that there's no chance of the model or components sticking to the surface.

Be careful when handling components with fragile elements such as "V"-hangers, "W"-irons or brake shoes. Unless you've saved spares from other kits by the same manufacturer, you'll have to get into the habit if you have problems with your fingers or manual dexterity.

It may help if you have had experience in building model 'plane or ship kits, and have developed some sort of routine in progressing stage-by-stage. Being introduced to model making at an early age - say seven or eight - is a bonus in this area of expertise.

There are numerous "how to" features in the model press, many authors seem to forget that a set of instructions comes with each kit and repeat the process. All I am doing here is to direct the mind onto the alternatives to the kit supplied, and to filling in the missing elements of instruction which, by virtue of space are omitted. The instructions can only give a step by step guide, not how to achieve any particular result. Keep an open mind, watch others, go to exhibitions - even those not necessarily designated for OO modellers, like the Scaleforum at Leatherhead in September, or EM-Gauge exhibitions - which are good for showing techniques and tricks of the trade. Buy some of the Wild Swan or Irwell publications and ENJOY your hobby, don't treat it as work, even when you do it for profit.

Wild Swan Publications, 1-3 Hagbourne Rd., Didcot, OX11 8DP
Irwell Press, 15 Lovers Lane, Grasscroft, Oldham, OL4 4DP

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