

My version of the modeling workstation

by Colin Snowdon

I read Phil Parkers article in Doga 7-2 with interest and thought my version of the same thing might interest members. I came at the need for the portable work place from a slightly different angle to Phil.



I had a separate workroom in which I could clatter and bang to my hearts content and keep out of everybody's way. This sounds like bliss but it isn't. I was, in fact, quite divorced from my family when engrossed in a project and being shut away it was a case of out of sight out of mind for them. This came to a head when I emerged once to discover it was early in the morning and an entire family of five had wandered off to bed without me noticing. This led me to look at what I was about and to reason that although it was a great hobby it was no reason to forget the family. I had to come out of the closet (literally) and be where I could be seen and therefore be available to others in the house.



The only space to move out to was the dining room table and as this was solid elm and cost a four-figure sum to buy it meant a foolproof workstation had to be devised. As it's not really a smart idea to reinvent the wheel all the time I had a look through the back numbers of the

Railway Modeller. Sure enough in the 1961 Denny special was Peter Denny's design for what I was after. Armed with the idea I could then adapt it to what I needed. 98% of most modellers work is with simple hand tools so I needed those on the bench easily available but not getting in the way or getting lost. This was covered by the raised back with its shelf, the flat surface of which has a variety of holes in it. Tools slip into a hole and are held by a strip 25 m.m high which encloses the area beneath the shelf. Behind this strip tuck the "helping hands" and a small anvil. At the front right is a sheet of 6m.m thick acrylic plastic which gives a flat surface for checking chassis etc. for truth. Screwed down through this is a 25 m.m parallel vice, which may sound a bit small but is perfectly adequate for fettling castings, cutting and filing brass and nickel and point making. There are two small trays on the left for the current model and two slightly larger trays on right for the tools such as scribes, drills and callipers that normally drift to the bottom of the toolbox. On the rear of the back is mounted a four socket extension lead and two coat hooks turned sideways around which the extension lead wire coils when out of use. The magnifying angle poise is only there because a kind relative gave me it after they lost the base, I used to use a desk light standing on the table. The base of the workstation is covered in baize to protect the tabletop and prevent slipping.

With this sort of work area it is important to remember that you have to be able to move the thing so tools are kept to just what you need and no more. It is far easier to put some tools back into the toolbox and replace them with others than to hump a ton of dead weight about. The same with the soldering iron, plug it in use it and then put it away to cool before you burn yourself on either the bit or the stand. I also make it a habit to keep all sharp tools such as scalpels in a separate locking box, which I only get out when I need it. I started this when the children were small, along with locking glues away in one place only, and it now means that there is no chance of a scalpel sliding off and into my leg when I move the workstation unless it can get out of its locked box.



Sizing on this sort of project is not vital. The base of my work place is a piece of block board 610 x 480 x19 because that was the size of the piece I found in my garden shed. However I would not like to recommend a thinner section than 19 m.m. or else there could be difficulties holding down the vice securely. The sides are 150 m.m. high at the back and along with other parts are made from 6 m.m. M.D.F. left over from a baseboard top. I made the sides as a pair and cut a handhold in each to lift and carry the work place. Sides and back are all screwed and glued to the base. The trays are made from hard board and plywood scraps left over from scenery work glued together. I costed the project up and it cost me £1:95 for the vice and £1:00 for the mini anvil, the rest was all lying around.

Does it work? Well I think it does, I can put tools away coil the mains lead and be off the table in less than two minutes and back into action in about the same time. Not only that but the

family now takes an interest in what's going on and quickly spot progress on the latest model. I can be part of a conversation as I work or stop to repair a zip, tighten someone's glasses screws or provide the answer to a homework question because I'm where I should be and not hidden away.

Please remember just because I did it this way does not imply Phil Parker is wrong with his ideas. If we travel along the I'm right you're wrong path we will soon be in the position of a certain fine scale publication where (in my opinion) no one is prepared to say what they've done and how for fear of being pilloried in the letter pages. As long as we keep exchanging ideas we are much stronger than a pack of bitching individuals and more able to further the pursuit of our chosen hobby in peace.

Lastly in his article Phil put his finger on two things that I think are important. Firstly he mentioned reading old modelling mags, they can be a gold mine of information particularly if you are strapped for cash and need to build rather than buy. I've just finished a rake of Brighton coaches at less than the cost of one kit and they look just right behind my Deans sidings E4. (If anyone can copy and send me the article from the Oct 1966 Railway Modeller I'll have some L.S.W.R coaches as well. Beg, Beg) Secondly? I could not agree more that a metre of track shuttle is a super way of relaxing after a tough day.

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