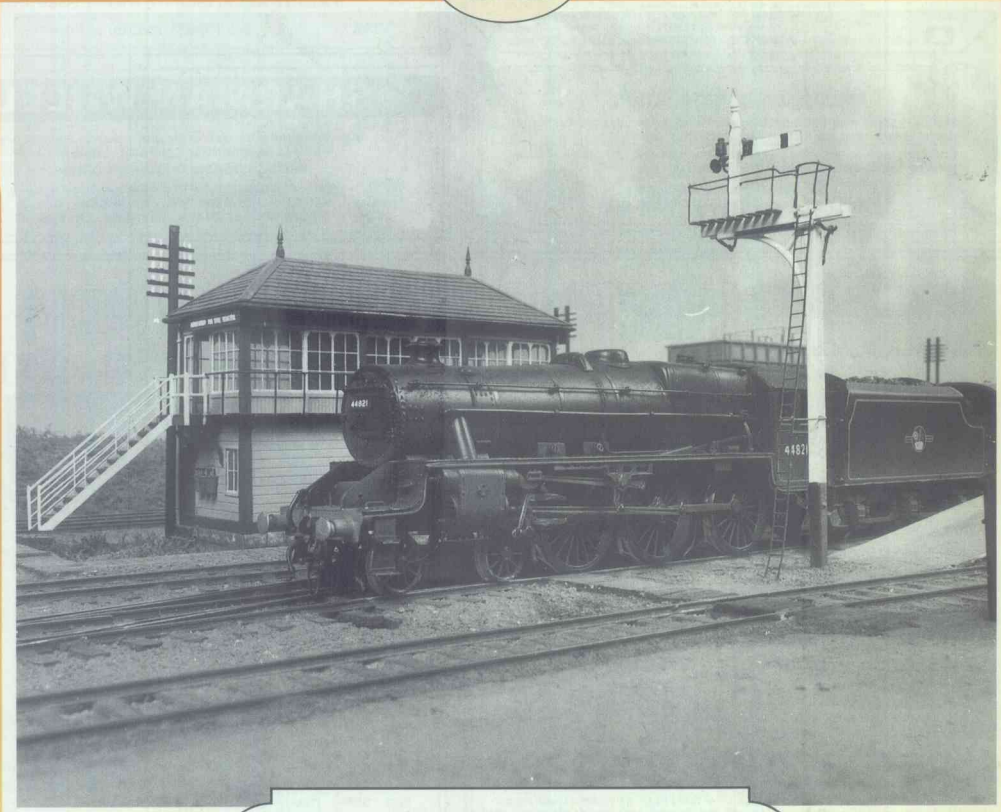


MODEL RAILWAY JOURNAL

PRICE £2.00

THE MODEL RAILWAY JOURNAL

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THE PLANET SWEET

FRANCIS SAMISH builds an ideal beginner's kit in 4mm:



Nonneminstre Models' 4mm kit for the Hibberd 'Planet' diesel-mechanical shunter is just the sort of loco to park at the end of your little-used industrial siding. Though intended for the Tenshodo WB24.5 motor bogie (which is extra) it can be built static; any gauge between 4ft 3in and the Irish standard of 5ft 3in seems prototypical.

The kit is cast in what appears to be a superior grade of whitmetal, and is noteworthy for the virtual absence of flash and misaligned edges. Everything for the superstructure is provided, right down to the handrail knobs and a pair of three-link couplings. Instructions take the form of six sides of A4, which not only include an exploded diagram and tips on finishing and painting, but also a set of six photocopied photos of a typical prototype.

A pair of three-hole 14mm disc wagon wheelsets are needed to replace the motor bogie's own wheels, which are undersize (and, for those of you working in 18.83mm gauge, the wrong profile). However, for 16.5mm gauge, it is possible to assemble the machine using the bogie as it is; Nonneminstre include a spacing plate to compensate for the resulting lack of height.

For the review model though, I unearthed a scratchbuilt 16.5mm compensated 2-2-0 drive mechanism — close enough to the 4ft 3in found on some Kent cement railways to ease the conscience! This was lying idle from another model and uses 20:1 gears and an open-frame motor mounted on end with a flywheel.

Construction commenced in earnest by assembling the buffer beams to the main foot-plate section, using low-melt solder. A hole was cut in the cab floor area to accommodate the

motor, and a tapped brass insert was affixed to the underside to take the power unit's retaining screw. This allows everything to drop out in one piece for servicing. With the Tenshodo bogie, Nonneminstre suggest that the cab roof be loosely stuck down so as to get at the fixing screw — or trust to something like Blu-Tak or bath sealant.

Bits of scrap whitmetal were then tacked into place at each end to support the motor unit and maintain sufficient gap for the Smith's couplings and their respective drawhook springs at each end. Even so, the hook shanks had to be filed down considerably to fit the bufferbeams, and fitted with shorter coils into the bargain.

Once everything was more or less the same height off the railhead, the cosmetic sideframes were added. For this model, I decided to go the whole hog and open out the top of the horns and solder in cut-down MJT van springs behind the openings. Incidentally, the same company's three-hole disc cast overlays are fitted to the brass Romford wheels on the chassis.

The four shock-absorbers came next, followed by the brake gear. This is supplied as an all-in-one casting, only requiring modest fettling and the addition of brake blocks to complete. Both ends were set to hang slightly outwards, to allow the wheels sufficient clearance for the power unit to be removed.

Buffers are not those from the kit, but a set of modified PC Models' LMS taper types fitted into opened-out holes in the beams. Instead of the recommended phosphor-bronze springing strip, the heads have little collars soldered on the end of the shank, leaving pips on which to locate American-made Kadee knuckle-coupler springs against tiny Z-brackets soldered directly

behind the buffer beams. To avoid gumming everything up, the buffing gear was only fitted after painting.

The superstructure is predominantly straight lines, and here I did find a minor problem in that the cabsides supplied are around 1mm too long at their fronts. The cab and front hood should both stop short of the buffer beams, not overlap them.

After the cab had gone on reasonably straight and all the edges were filled with low-melt, attention turned to the hood. The cast mesh in the side openings was drilled through and opened out and brass gauze soldered in; first tin the edges with ordinary solder and then low-melt in the usual way. A grille cover was fitted on the offside. The best way of assembling the whole front is to fix the sides of the 'box' in first, and only then slip in the top section of the hood. Though this part needs to be level with the sides — and on a slant — it does not matter too much if there are gaps at the edges. Just use low-melt to fill, scraping and filing down to finish off.

As a final touch, I decided to go one better than the kit by fitting the model with a silencer atop the cab. The roof proper was left unfixed to allow glazing to be added after painting. I did not use the kit's headlamp castings because the loco photographed seemed not to have them — and was similarly bereft of lamp irons!

Finish is faded green overall and red buffer beams over cellulose grey primer with weathering to taste. Glazing is merely ½mm thick clear plastic, sawn into rectangles rather than snapped out, and filed to flush-fit the openings after painting.

Verdict? Well, barring the too long cab sides, I found few real problems, and would have no reservations in recommending the kit as ideal for a first attempt at soldered construction. The short wheelbase means that the loco will wobble a bit from side to side, but there is plenty of adhesive weight for haulage and current pick-up. Under code 4L002, it retails at £23.50 including P & P (cheques payable to Peter Smith) direct from Nonneminstre Models, 46 Hide Gardens, Rustington, West Sussex, BN16 3NP.

