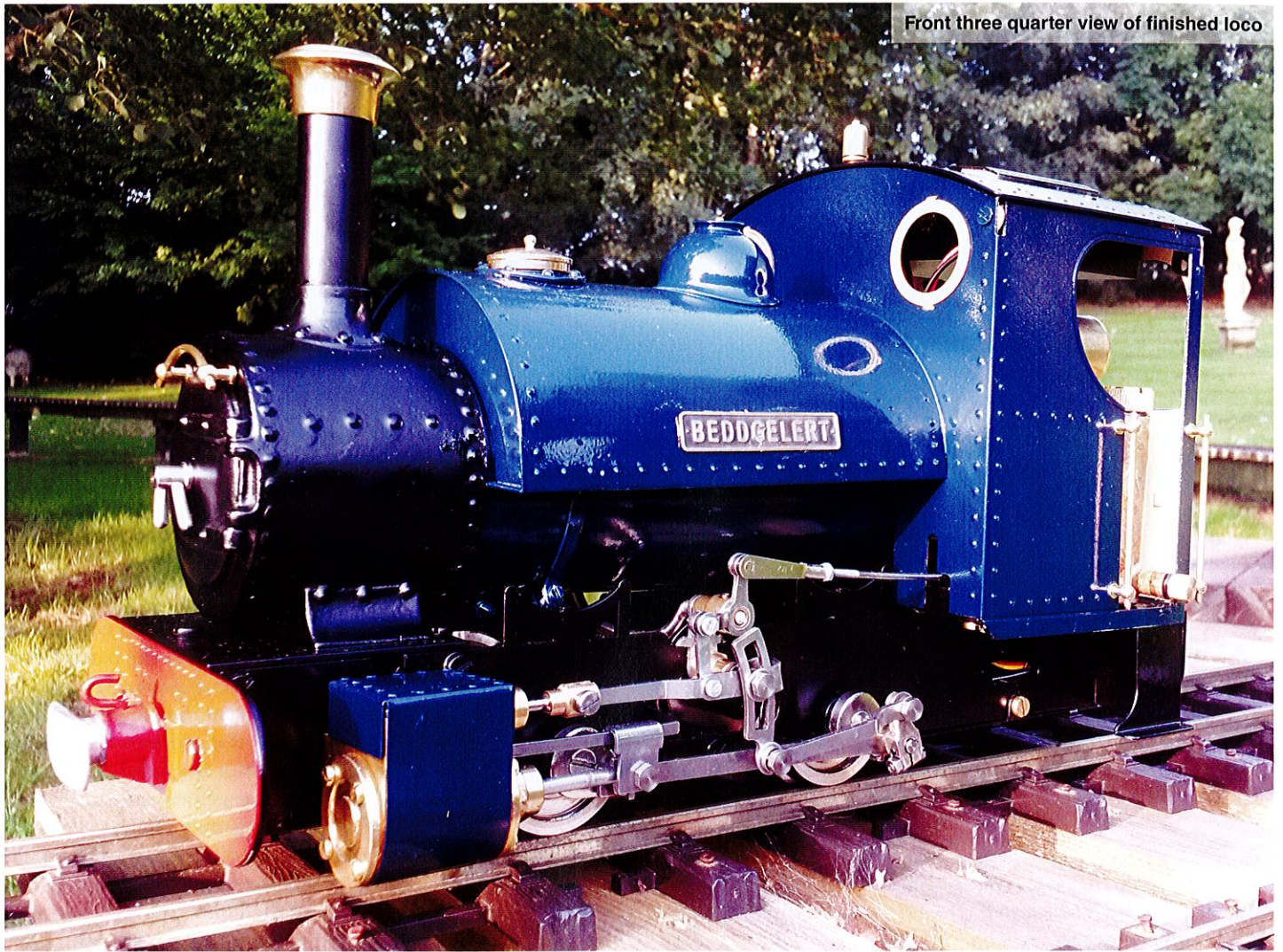


Front three quarter view of finished loco



Who Needs O Level Woodwork?

John Mileson recounts his experience of building a Roundhouse Katie kit

Throughout my life, I have carried the burden of one GCE 'O' Level, namely woodwork... So you can probably gather I am not the sharpest knife in the drawer. The woodwork qualification has, however, ensured I can make a shelf!

When it comes to kits for model railway locomotives then I am pushing to the limit my intellectual boundaries. Why then bother to attempt to construct the Roundhouse 'Katie' kit? This summer has opened my eyes to the wonders of narrow gauge modelling, in particular 16mm, and for some reason I

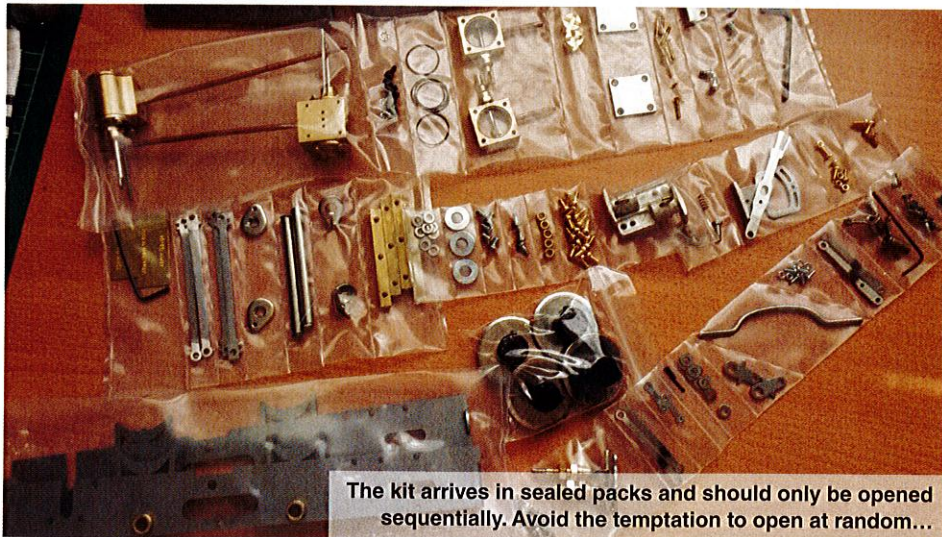
have opted for 45mm gauge track. Oh yes, I remember, it was after visiting Alan Regan's lovely garden layout. As a result of this visit I recently purchased two, new factory built Roundhouse locos, 'Russell' and 'Beddgelert', and now I am totally hooked.

As we shall see, I don't know a 'weighshaft' from a pork pie, although I suspect I would be able to tell the difference when attempting to swallow them... I decided to purchase a 'Katie' kit having seen a picture of one in the 16mm Association magazine, and it appeared to be a bit different from the

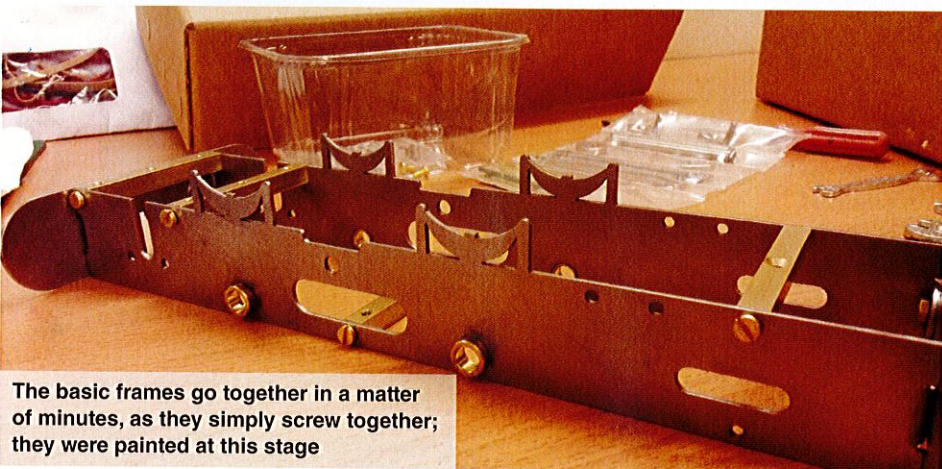
two locos I already had. I admit when the packages arrived I was impressed from the start.

BEAUTIFULLY PACKAGED

Everything was well boxed and the components within beautifully packaged. I wanted to build the complete engine and opted for the chassis, boiler, bodywork and radio control modules. I recalled, when unpacking the kit, the time as a boy when my Christmas present was the Airfix Grey Ferguson Tractor kit; I suppose this was in the early 1950s. As

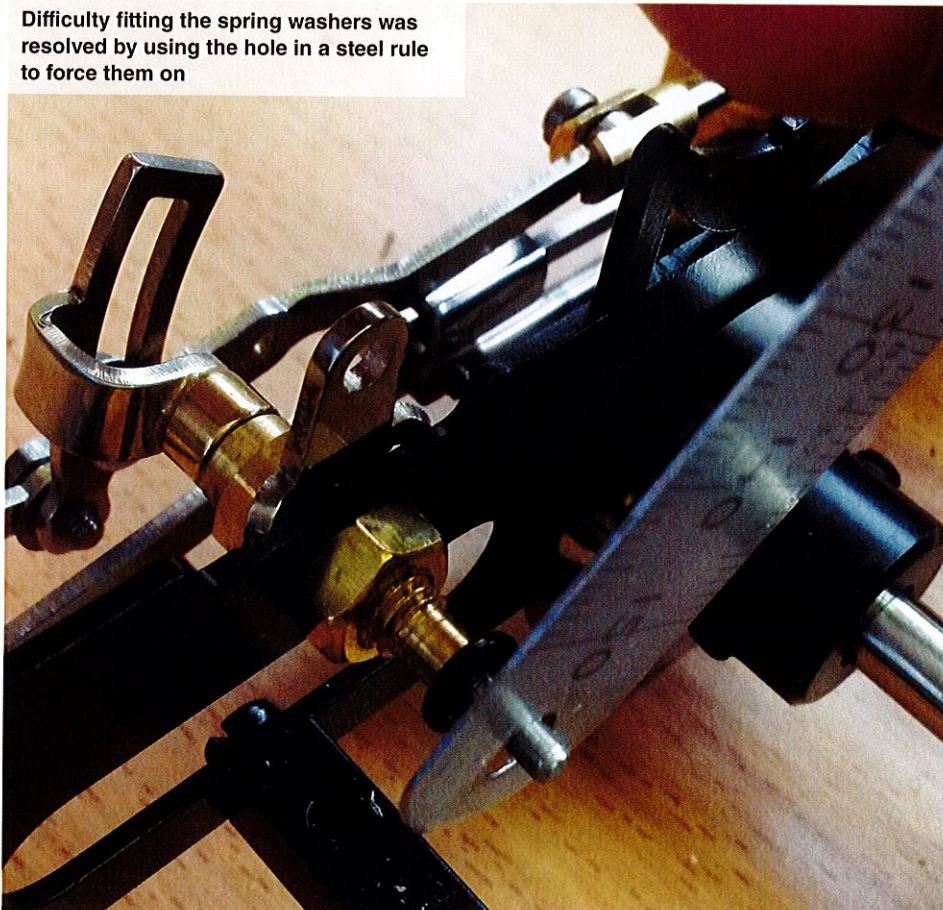


The kit arrives in sealed packs and should only be opened sequentially. Avoid the temptation to open at random...



The basic frames go together in a matter of minutes, as they simply screw together; they were painted at this stage

Difficulty fitting the spring washers was resolved by using the hole in a steel rule to force them on



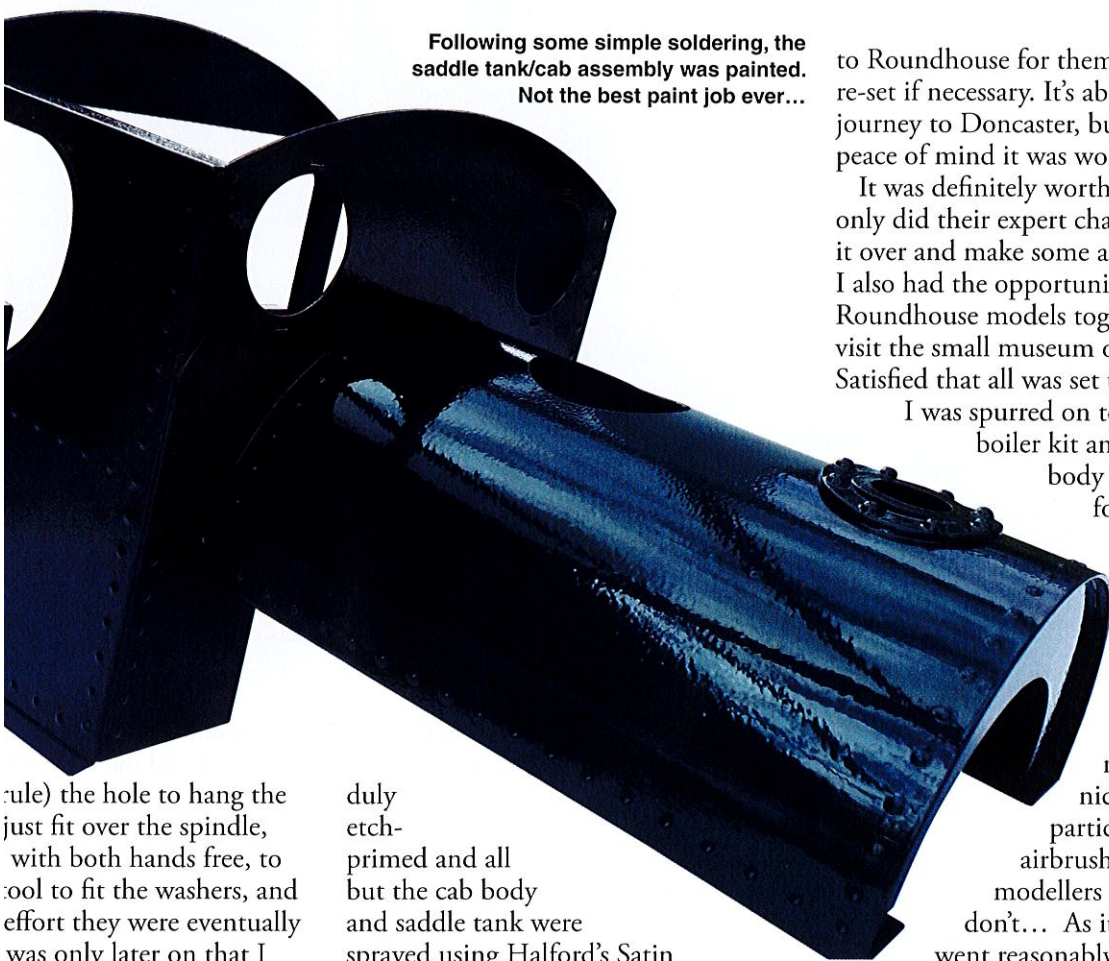
it happened my Dad and I ended up building this without any instructions, because for some obscure reason they had disappeared down the gap between the wall and fireplace in our living room. It was glued together with nail varnish!

The instructions for the Roundhouse kits are superb, some of the best I have ever seen. There are one or two things that possibly could be improved to aid the novice, such as identifying what a weighshaft looks like. A sketch of this item for identification purposes would have been appreciated. All I did was ignore the paragraph concerning this item and went on blindly without fitting this illusive component. My reasoning was that when all the other bits have been used up, then the bit that was left must be the weighshaft.

Having opted for the radio control module, which included the battery box and various other components, I was disappointed to find that there were no servo motors or transmitters. 'O' Level Woodwork did not cover radio control, so I did not have a clue what I still needed and it was only after a call to Chris at Roundhouse, that she informed me of the components I required to complete the radio control. She suggested going online and purchasing them from the internet. It was then I explained to her I did not have a computer. I also wanted the finished loco to be a proper Roundhouse locomotive; in other words with all the fittings that they have on their ready-to-run, factory built locomotives. Chris offered to sell the missing components to me. I wondered after this why the complete radio control module did not include the transmitter and fittings as optional extras.

The assembly of the chassis was quite straight forward and by carefully following the clear instructions, the cranks, cylinders and connecting rods and other components all went well. Well almost. Trying to get the 'Starlock' washers onto the expansion link pivot pin was a Herculean exercise. The instructions suggest using a pair of long nosed pliers. Perhaps it's just me, but I could not force these wretched washers on... After about half an hour's physical effort, plus grovelling around on the floor looking for rogue washers that had sprung out of the jaws of the pliers, I almost called it a day. Seeing my 6 inch rule on the bench, it struck

Following some simple soldering, the saddle tank/cab assembly was painted. Not the best paint job ever...

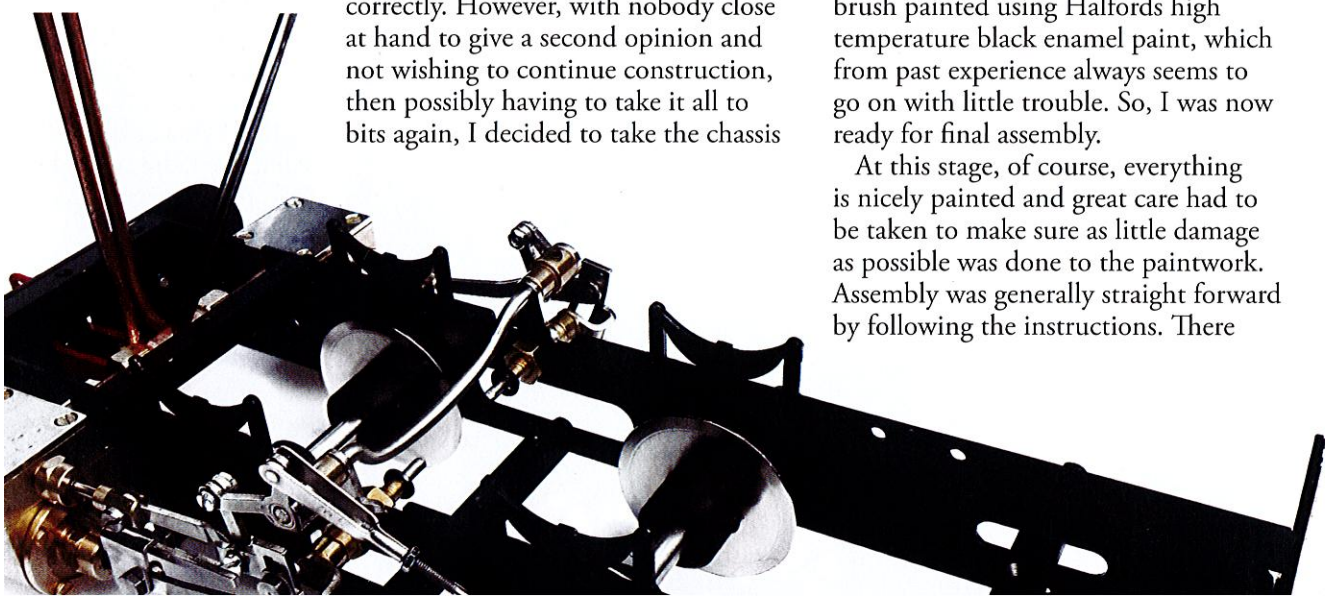


rule) the hole to hang the
just fit over the spindle,
with both hands free, to
ool to fit the washers, and
effort they were eventually
was only later on that I
veighshaft needed to be
the washers. Of course
e on, they don't come off...
part from this minor
thing went very well. In the
olding and soldering the cab
constructing the saddle
piece of cake'. These were

duly
etch-
primed and all
but the cab body
and saddle tank were
sprayed using Halford's Satin
Black spray cans.

SET IT CORRECTLY

Valve timing was the tricky bit for me... Having spent an hour or so endeavouring to set up the valve timing correctly, I was reasonably sure, but not very sure I must admit, that I had set it correctly. However, with nobody close at hand to give a second opinion and not wishing to continue construction, then possibly having to take it all to bits again, I decided to take the chassis



to Roundhouse for them to check and re-set if necessary. It's about a 2½ hour journey to Doncaster, but I thought for peace of mind it was worthwhile.

It was definitely worth going. Not only did their expert chassis man check it over and make some adjustments, but I also had the opportunity to see all the Roundhouse models together, and to visit the small museum on the premises. Satisfied that all was set up correctly,

I was spurred on to tackle the boiler kit and complete the body kit in readiness for painting.

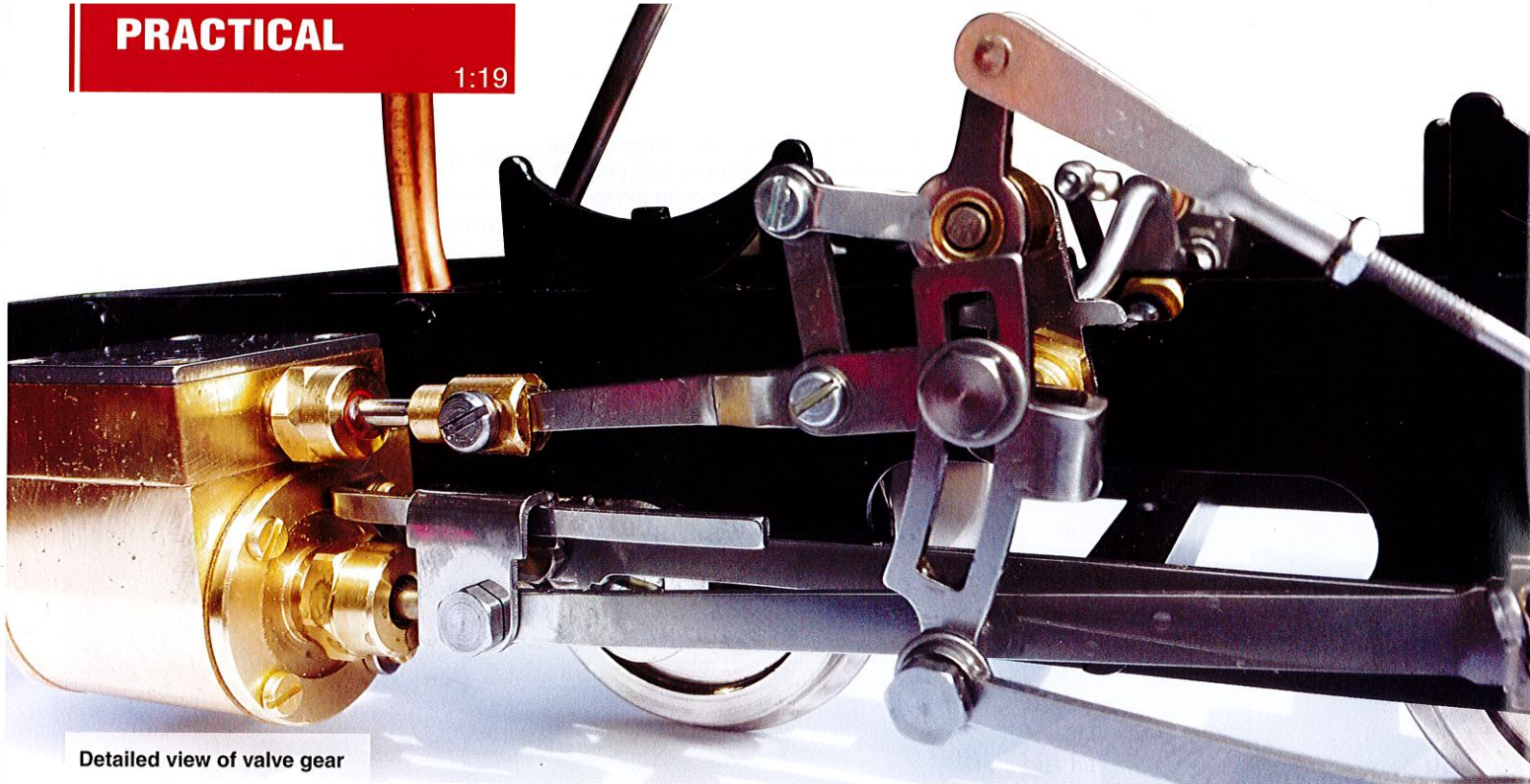
I find painting models difficult. This is the opportunity to completely ruin a

nice model, particularly when airbrushing. Some

modellers revel in it. I don't... As it happened it went reasonably well, although

I seemed to get most of the paint on my hands and surrounding surfaces. The tank and cab were sprayed Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway Blue, using Phoenix Precision Paints. I didn't obtain as high a gloss as I had hoped for, but at least it was painted. The smokebox and boiler were brush painted using Halfords high temperature black enamel paint, which from past experience always seems to go on with little trouble. So, I was now ready for final assembly.

At this stage, of course, everything is nicely painted and great care had to be taken to make sure as little damage as possible was done to the paintwork. Assembly was generally straight forward by following the instructions. There



Detailed view of valve gear

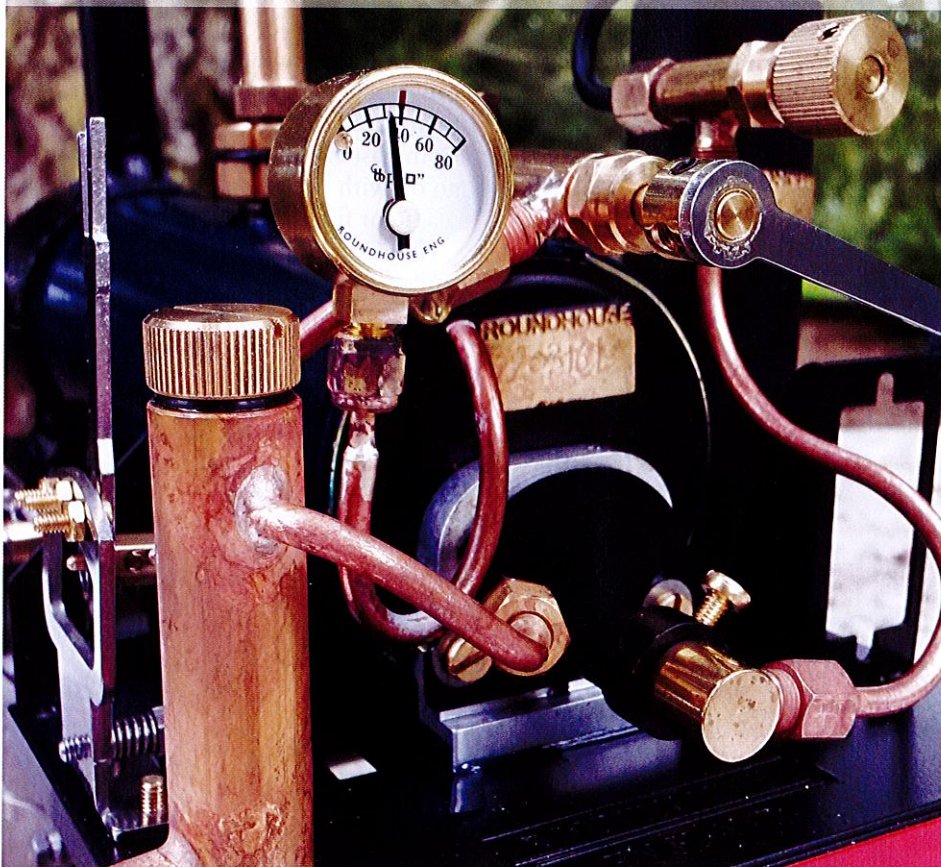
were one or two instances when the instructions were bypassed, e.g. they suggest attaching the front footplate to the smoke box before cleaning and painting. If you do that it's almost impossible to assemble it to the chassis. Better to paint separately and fix the front footplate to the chassis and then the smoke box to the footplate. I know

it is nit picking, particularly when the instructions are generally so good. The cab and saddle tank were left until last and were not fitted until all the testing had been completed.

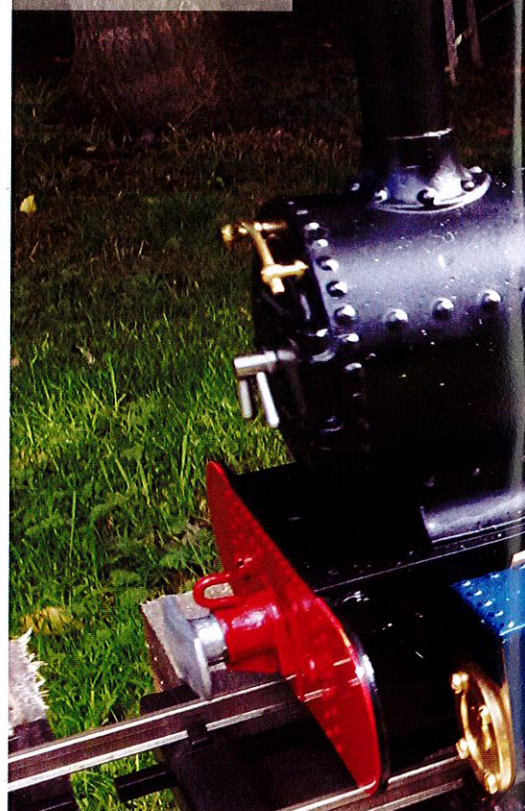
The pipework for the gas tank, lubricator and regulator and associated parts went well, although I was apprehensive about connecting the

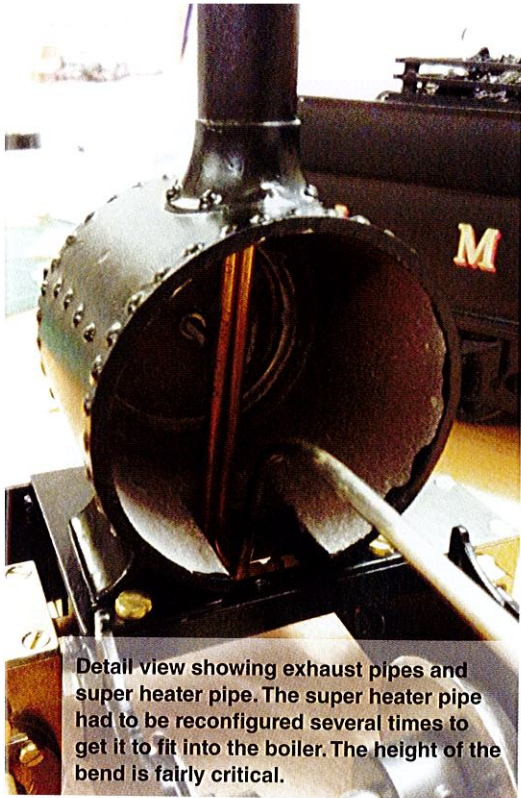
various unions, endeavouring not to cross-thread the nuts. Although ultimately a radio control system was to be fitted, I set up the engine for manual control using all the components provided in the kit. This was done mainly to prove the operation of the loco prior to complicating it with the radio control, so this meant fitting the

Back head complete. Bending the pipe work was tricky. In fact, when the radio control servos were put in place the gas pipe on the right required re-bending to clear the servo arm. Note the manual forward/reverse lever on the left. This was installed to allow the first test steaming to take place.

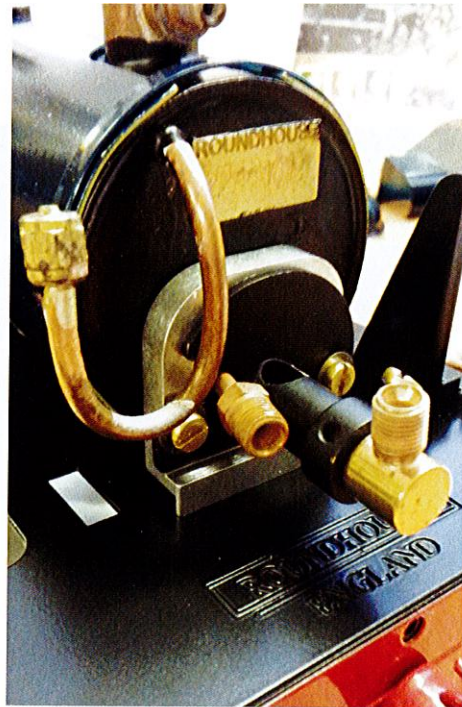


On test for the first time on the track; the wagon attached is purely for carrying the battery box which will be fitted to the cab roof.





Detail view showing exhaust pipes and super heater pipe. The super heater pipe had to be reconfigured several times to get it to fit into the boiler. The height of the bend is fairly critical.



Backhead showing the gas burner assembly fitted. Note the threaded portion of the superheater pipe poking through.



Fitting the radio control servo; this shows the nut attached to a coffee stirrer with Blu-tac



The forward/reverse servo fitted and wiring clipped

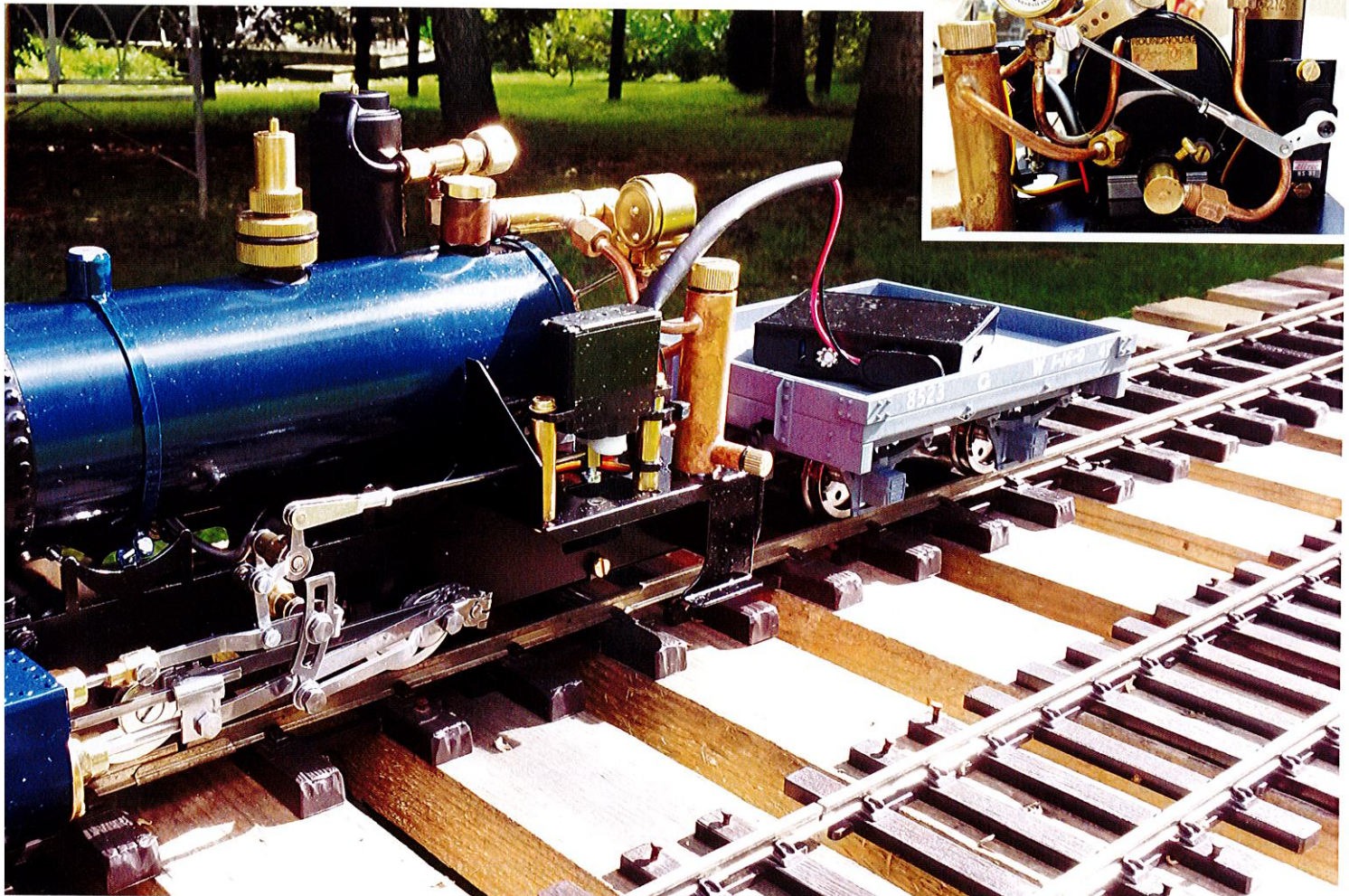
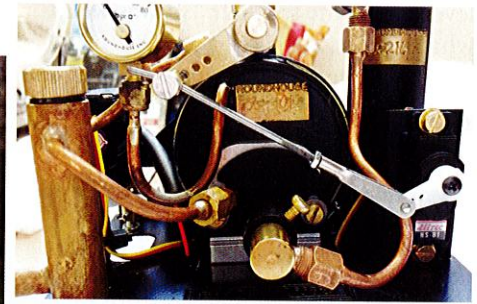
manual regulator and the forward/reverse lever.

When satisfied all was well, it was a question of taking it out into the garden to test under steam pressure. It was duly set up on two blocks; the valve gear and motion was well oiled and the various vessels filled with gas and water as required before firing up.

ALL WAS WELL

It seemed to take an age to come up to pressure, but I put this down to nervous tension for it could only have been just over five minutes when the safety valve blew at the required 40 psi. Forward gear was selected, the regulator opened, and off she went. Perfect. Well almost, as steam leaked from a couple of the

This shows the servo connected to the regulator; minor adjustments were necessary for both servos



Side Elevation of the completed loco; some photos like these would have been useful in the instructions.



unions. These were gradually tightened, very carefully avoiding too much leverage on the spanner. All was well; what a relief...

With some success under my belt, the next job was fitting the radio control system. 'O' level woodwork certainly did not prepare me for this activity. Anything to do with electricity, yet alone radio signals is totally alien to me. However, using the same system as Roundhouse (all purchased from them), it turned out to be a doddle. The only difficulty was fitting one of the nuts that secured the regulator servo to the existing bracket on the footplate. I spent about an hour trying to fit this wretched nut. Once again much of the time was spent crawling about on the floor looking for it... The solution came in the form of a wooden coffee stirrer, to which a little Blu Tack was placed and the nut stuck to this. Bingo... In half a minute the job was done.

The final adjustments were made to the servo linkages. This is a bench job and the loco needed to be steamed up in order to make the necessary adjustments. Here a word of warning. When steaming up outside, much of the steam and spitting boiling water is dissipated into the air and surrounding garden, whereas when sitting at a bench with the loco raised on blocks, it is a different matter. It's amazing just how

much steam and water are emitted, most of it, in this instance, going over the bench and more crucially, over me... Having dried off, the setting up of the travel on the radio control linkage was simple and I was able to sit back and play with the engine in relative comfort. I felt a glow of pride.

When the excitement was over, and the loco had cooled off, it only remained for the cab and saddle tank assembly to be fitted and the job was done. In the end, I was very disappointed. Oh, not in the engine, but in the fact that my 'winter project' had been completed in two weeks during September...

To sum up, Roundhouse have an enviable reputation and justifiably so. The kit went together like a dream, and any support I required over the phone from the company, was freely given. You can't ask for more. Did I find a down side to this Roundhouse kit? I have to think really hard, because quite honestly it's as good as it gets. The components are beautifully made and finished, so I have no complaints in that area. The instruction books are superb, but maybe a photo or two of the completed loco and of all the components (remember the weighshaft?), might be helpful.

This kit is a great introduction to 16mm narrow gauge live-steam engines and at a reasonable cost. In fact building it yourself saves several hundred pounds.

But it's more than that really. Buying a finished loco off the shelf is wonderful at the time. Making one for yourself just adds that little bit of extra pride in ownership of these lovely engines.

Can I recommend this kit? Well, what do you think?

Just to round off there is always, to my way of thinking, the irritating paragraph that states the obvious. No, I do not have any connection with Roundhouse, Halfords, Phoenix Paints, or indeed have I ever, in my 70 years, had any connection with any company. Not quite true, I did own a Vauxhall car when I worked for that company! There, that's got that irritation off my chest. ■

Garden Rail Resource

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Please mention **Garden Rail**
when contacting suppliers.