

Andrew's Musings Part 11

Throughout these articles, you may have noticed a recurring theme, something little transforms into something big, one little purchase ends up being another module idea, putting more pressure into the 1:1 scale area downstairs. Hey, with the equivalent of 22 modules stored away which are the scale equivalent of 100m long each, there is the potential for 4.4km of mainline track running around in my basement, if I arranged them correctly.

Well it happened again. I had a call from Linda. Her husband had passed away and she needed some advice on what to do with his extensive array of DCC European trains and layout. She had my contact details because John came and thoroughly enjoyed the European mini-convention that we hosted in 2013. Over the next few weeks Benjamin, Dominic and I carefully took the layout apart ready for selling off the components. John was a perfectionist – it was beautiful stuff!

Well we ended up purchasing quite a few things ourselves and Linda asked if there was anything we would like for free as a thank you for the time given. Dominic liked the station and the arched platform roof, which would go well with the airport scene that he had in mind. We could have just brought it home and stored it up on a shelf with everything else we have, but no, given we have Benjamin on the go, I needed to get started with Dominic's as well.



Given that I'm paying for most of the stuff on the modules, I do have a little bit of say as to the track layout. That's not to say I'm cheap about it, in fact quite the opposite where I try to maximise the effect of the module but keep the trackwork very clear and purposeful. By maximising, I probably mean interesting, with curves and flow, rather than just being straight along the edge, but if I can get away with one point, then why would the 1/87th track engineers have put two in?

Dominic's was a case of me trying to do something different. He had the station, the airport in behind and the plans for the Faller cars driving across the front, possibly on a motorway. I had the idea of a multi-platform through station (well 3 platforms to be exact as seen above) but with a fourth platform being a terminating track, for the likes of the mail train in the old days, or for a branch line railcar in more recent times to be able to switch off the main lines. That's great, with the railcar switching off this terminating line, but when starting back again it needs to get over to the opposite mainline. Here's where the problem begins. With our mainlines at 64.3mm apart, you need to use two wide radius turnouts to switch between the lines, which takes up too much room and creates a funny S bend, when a double slip point would be so much more compact and efficient in operation. For C track, these are only available in 77.5mm standard turnout versions.

Not to be deterred, it got me thinking about getting this intersection into a corner, much like the port scene turning 60 degrees to transition smoothly from the inner container yard to the outer wharf line. That worked very well again in this case, except for the next problem. You don't come

back from a 60 degree turn easily to join up with the next module. This is where I went radical and decided to keep turning another 30 degrees, so that the whole module became a big inverse corner. Looks quite neat having this station and the associated airport on a totally different visual plane (excuse the pun) than the rest of the modules. The picture below shows the slight wiggle work done to the right to open up the track for the 77.5mm standard point and double slip to work.



Then there's the car system. Given there was to be a motorway running down below, with the same cars passing the station one level up and going to the airport as well on the next level (see the three levels of masking tape in the picture above), I decided to build this extra-large inverse corner as one module. This avoids the problem with cars negotiating the module joins, as well as the fact that the station would have been sitting right across the join, meaning it would have to be removable, along with all the associated lighting and platforms. We had also built another scene to drop into the motorway well, for something different. It was a marina full of small pleasure craft tied up to the wharves, with a ferry terminal opposite, the ferry taking on board the next load of passengers (as seen before but repeated here).



Something went wrong.

Whether it was the transition between layers was just too much for the car system, or the fact that I had the wrong tool for routing out the trench for the wire, or the second marina scene was not quite coming together right or . . . it probably really came down to this massive box that was difficult to store anywhere (relooking at the picture above, yes I can see that it was just far too large). I pulled the plug, went back to the key component (being the station and platforms) and worked out a better way to achieve the same outcome. In the end it was easy. Instead of a 60 degree turn, I've turned the mainline 6 degrees towards the rear, with the inner line turning slightly earlier to expand the gap from 64.3mm to 77.5mm. It now moves a lot quicker into the point work to the terminating line and through the rest of the station, before curving back over a road below to join the next module 2.44m later (ie: it is now a standard straight double module). The station is right in the middle and the car system will be driving all over it, so it is still built as a single unit, but it should be a lot easier to manage than previously.

Then there's the actual airport. In some ways that's the easy bit, because there's a lot of flat space across an airfield, which will be on a separate 2.4 x 1.2 table at the rear of the module. Dominic has a couple of smaller scale 747s on the go, which we will put further back for perspective, hidden slightly behind the air bridges, service vehicles and the home-built airport terminal. It will be the front section needing a bit more work, especially given we want the cars to drive up to the terminal to drop passengers off. There needs to be a multi-level carpark and hotel, and plenty of signage and detail guiding people where to go. Good thing Robyn likes doing that side of things 😊. I'm just trying to work out having a small plane take off and land . . . I have some ideas, but there is plenty else for us to do first.

Given that the new look is still basically bare boards, I'll leave it there. Next steps, once the car system is in place, will be to put the overhead wiring spans in place and create yet another city landscape, perhaps a bit more of a low rise residential scene, similar to the build-up of housing around Wellington airport. Time will tell.