

## Modelling Dornoch Branch Buildings

Neil Walker

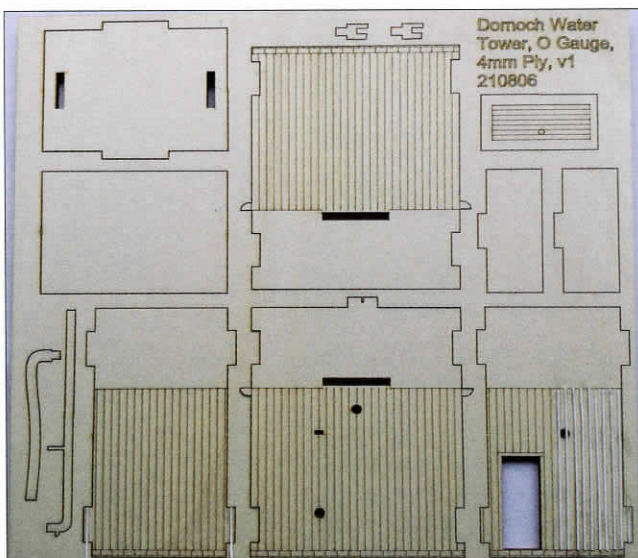
When casually looking through some very old magazines at my Model Railway Club I came across an article showcasing a fabulous EM layout called Cullicudden. It just so happened that it was built and exhibited by a former chairman of our Model Railway Club and good friend Laurie Griffin. For reference the article is in *Model Railway Journal* No. 21 1988. The layout instantly inspired my appetite to build a similar layout as Laurie quoted, 'Oozes Scottish atmosphere and delivers a scenic model of the Highland Railway'. Both Dornoch and Lybster provided inspiration for structures such as the station building and engine shed. I immediately researched the Dornoch branch and decided it would make a lovely model in 7mm scale.

Having gathered lots of old pictures and books that referenced the branchline, I immediately realised the challenge of modelling the buildings to visualise the architectural designs and materials used.

And oh how timely was the article by Chris Leigh in *Model Rail* magazine No. 288 July 2021. It has helped me immensely on my journey to getting the buildings built to a good standard. Chris demonstrated how to build Dornoch station using an off the shelf laser-cut kit in 4mm scale by Pop-Up Designs. The kits are very basic but structurally accurate. The external panelling and vertical batten are cosmetically lined by the laser process. Chris Leigh demonstrated how to assemble the kits and then how to enhance the details by using styrene and Evergreen products. The end result is a great model and this inspired me to follow this method.

Andy and Fiona Cox at Pop-Up Designs have a catalogue of splendid kits designed by Iain Ross to build Scottish railway structures. I immediately contacted Andy and Iain who kindly offered to re-scale the kits they had on offer to 7mm scale for me. They arrived within weeks. I've managed to get the water tower, the engine shed and the station. Unfortunately, their catalogue did not include any of the two goods sheds at Dornoch so they are going to be scratch built using much of the same methods as on the water tower, engine shed and station.

The water tower was first to be built. I considered using either the Evergreen Board and Batten styrene sheets, or, committing to the time-



consuming exercise of gluing on styrene strips individually. Evergreen produce 0.5 by 1mm strips in packs of 10.

I decided on the latter for the prime reason that I'd prefer the battens to be less uniform. Looking at photos of the old buildings, it's clear some battens are warped, some are loose and some are broken or missing, so adding them individually would give a more enhanced and rustic look.

I laid out the constituent parts and added battens one-by-one. This was a very time-consuming exercise but I'm delighted with the final effect.

I added extra details to enhance the look and give the models more realism.

On the engine shed, the doors were plain and lacked items such as hinges, locks and an integral door. So I added these with the use of styrene strips and brass rods to give a more enhanced finish. Regarding the water tower, I added a chain and a water spout using a drinking straw and paper. The type of straws that have the concertinaed bendy section are just perfect for the job and I'm delighted with the effect





it has given.

Then it was down to painting and weathering. I practiced on some samples first with various colours before committing to the models.

I used Humbol acrylics but thinned them down to make a 'wash' of the paint rather than plaster it over. I built the colours up over layers. The first wash seemed to soak into the ply walls and bring out the wood colour so that instantly gave the models a lovely effect.

I started with lighter colours thinned down then built up the darker colours until I had the darkest colour I wanted. I used many colours from white, creams, burnt umber, yellow, various shades of brown and red mixed on the pallet to create the shades I was happy with. It's a case of building up the patches

of colours as there is no consistent colour throughout but an effect of old and well-weathered timber.

I let it all dry then started to dry brush on a mix of yellows, creams and rusty colours to weather the battens and boards. Also a little green here and there to visualise moss effect and add in a few strategic drip stains that have built up over the years.

I added a few coats of varnish to the inside of the top of the water tower tank to visualise water but think it may need a few more coats of varnish to give a more cosmetic look of depth of water in there.

The engine shed was a larger painting job as I'd also added wood panelling and shelves inside and that all needed a wash of colour too.

The water tower is complete. The engine shed requires a bit more paint on a few odd battens. Lead flashing, guttering and down pipes need to be fixed. The engine shed is designed to be embedded into the baseboard because the ground slopes down towards the trackside showing stonework beneath the shed.

The station is the next building to start.

