

KENT NEWSLETTER



Newsletter 14

October 2020

Article Wayne Evans-Addy

Mid-September sees first running day of the year.

Although many people have found 2020 with extra time at home either working from home, furloughed or shielding, fortunately I have been able to continue work normally.

Alex & I moved into our house in Ashford last year, it was surprising how much work has been required to turn the house into our home, which is still ongoing prioritising the priorities. The House and Garden was used as venue for the evening venue following our wedding last year and was to be the venue for my 50th Birthday party in June this year which had to be postponed and was re-planned with the easing of the COVID restrictions for this weekend, however, with the numbers having to drop from 30 to 6 it was cancelled. It was also to celebrate our first wedding anniversary.

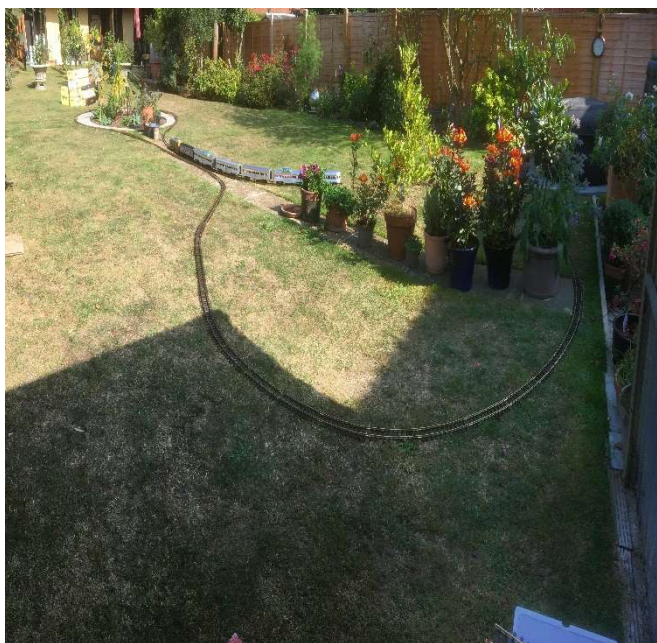
Today 20th September actually saw a day where there was nothing screaming that needed to be done so, although loose laid I was in a position to get out some of the boxes of track that have been purchased and loose lay a basic layout. Between us we have an eclectic collection of rolling stock, most of my stock is UK/USA mainline where Alex's is mainly German Narrow gauge and Denver & Rio Grande western style stock. With both having Nephews, Nieces and God children all of whom love Thomas the tank engine has meant us getting the characters to run when they visit (although has been a small loose lay oval using R1 curves)



Amtrak coming around the curve

This summer has seen a round "tropical" flower bed installed into the garden with stone slab pathway around the outside. This lends itself for having a (Piko G) R7 circle on it which overlaps the outside edge.

Although unlikely to be a permanent feature I can see it being laid when we are in a situation of having running days with members round. It would be possible to be on a spur from the main layout connecting up to sets of catch points. It is intended to plan the layout over this coming winter and lay in the outer flower beds. Most of the layout will be at ground level with gentle sweeping curves so the track comes and goes in and out of sight. The curves in the photos are (Piko G) R7 and (LGB) R5 apart from 2x (Piko G) R3 curves. I have more than 1 Aristocraft Class 66 which needs a minimum curve of R3, however, with bigger curves allows a more realistic track formation for the locos. That said there will be parts of the final layout where these large locos and other rolling stock won't be able to venture, but in a way like the real



The two loops can be seen in this photo



James with the Anne, Clarabelle and co

SOME OLD MEMORIES



Martin Piper's Diesel running day and GER out at Kent show and the late Paul Newman in the middle of the photo

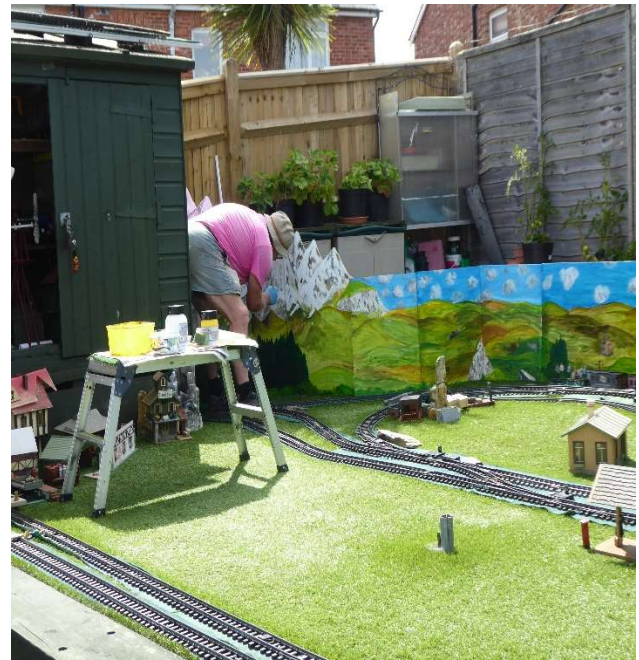
ARTICLE DAVE FENNER

LOCK DOWN BACK DROP. follow up

In newsletter 13 Dave put in an article about his lock down time and how he decided to construct a backdrop around his garden layout to bring it to life with some scenes



This photo you can see the green supports behind the builds and the next the palm back scene boards ready to paint



Dave painting the back boards ready to put up, completed back scenes offered up to show snowy mountains and the green hills and valleys below

As Dave has worked his way round he has covered the village area and the sidings and steam train shed with back scene boards giving the view with a sense of depth as can be seen in the photo below

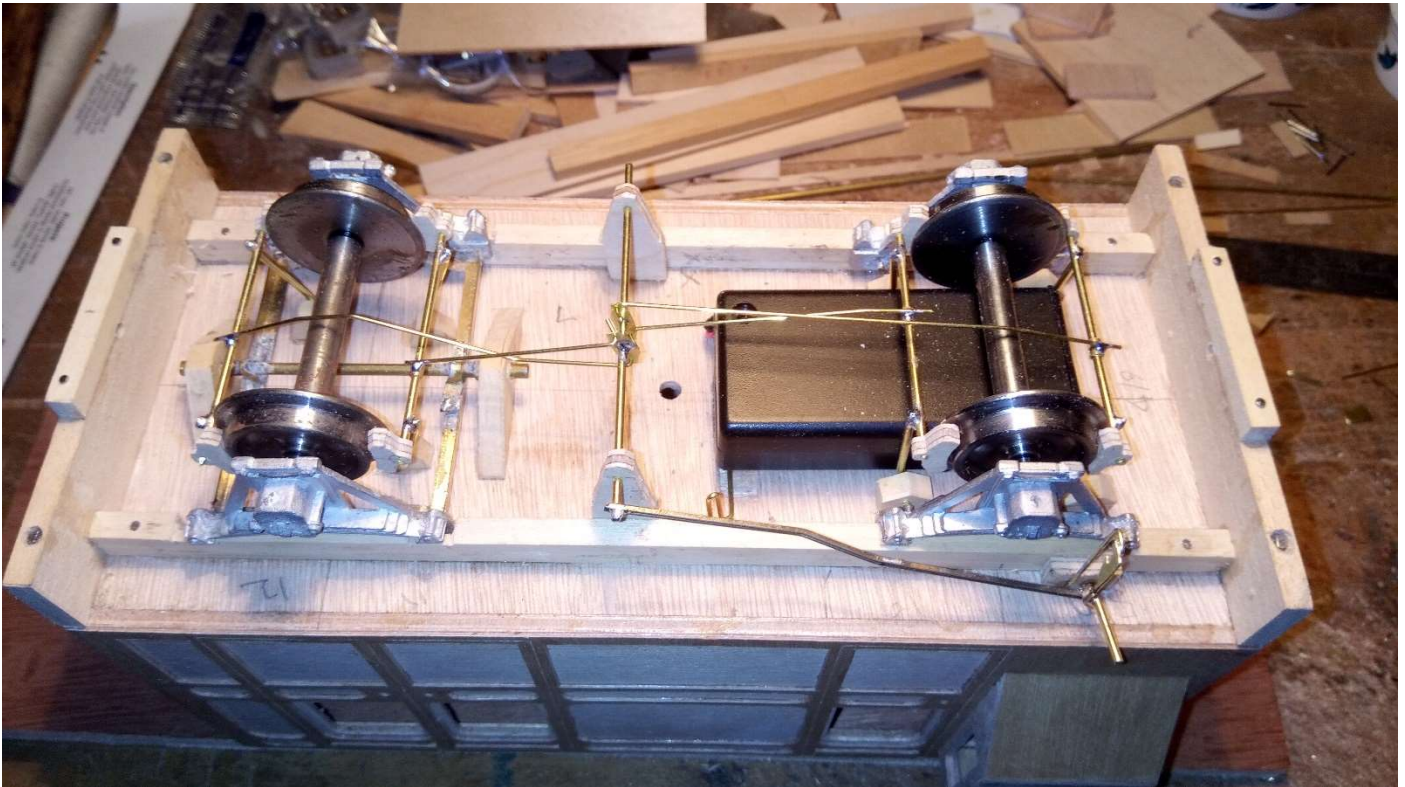


The scene showing the village with the signal box at the front and the factory and pub and to the left you can see the steam train shed with the church surrounded by the green hills and blue sky. It's a great job that Dave has done to bring his green railway to life.

ARTICLE BY DAVID GROVES: - BRAKE GEAR FOR A BRAKE VAN

You know how it is, middle of 'lockdown', life being a little tiresome and feeling a bit flat. I had just put a scratch-built luggage/ brake van together and had mounted the battery box underneath for the brake light. Briefly digressing it is not an easy task attaching an IP Engineering battery box under a van so one could change the batteries. The battery access lid and the switch are on opposing sides. I drill a hole through the slide switch and attach a piece of brass rod (1mm diam) out to the side. I chisel out a slot in the van floor to take the switch and rod (which sits proud of the box around 4mm). I then attach the battery box. Hence the access to the batteries is downside and the brass rod operates the switch. Also, the light can be operated while the van is still on the track.

I started putting some ideas together to fit brake shoes. It is a brake van! Without much more work I could make them operate. My thought process was 'has there been any times when a loco separate from the train and the carriages slowly move annoyingly of their own accord due to the slight gradient of the track?'. The answer is yes, and it is a pain. So, a way of holding them in place would be useful.



I made brake shoes from scrap 3mm plywood. A pair of shoes are joined by a piece of 1mm brass rod. Before gluing them, I slid on two short sections of brass tube over the rod in between the two shoes. Close to each shoe I soldered two L shape droppers. The droppers are attached to the floor with a piece of lime strip wood. When glued into place the pair of shoes rotate nicely to and fro into the tread of the wheel set. I found that they worked much better if the radius of the shoe face is the same as the wheel.

The central crank rod spans across two V hangers. It is not in the middle where it should be. The roof is held in place via a drop bolt which is in the middle. Care is needed here. The movement on the brake shoes is around 2mm, the cranks are 5mm (centre of crank to centre of wire going to the brake shoe hangers), the brake arm is 75mm (centre of crank to arm handle), that makes the handle travel at around 30mm. The arm (code 100 rail) is cranked to move it around the axle box and is held in place with an oblong of wire. This oblong had two catches which hold the arm in the off and on positions to prevent unwanted activation. The connectors between the main central crank and the brake hangers should be straight but need to be bent slightly to get around the wheel axles. They are soldered to the small pieces of tube. You will notice from the photo that one of the axles is compensated (habit from making smaller wagons – not really needed but fantastic on uneven track).

I was surprised that it really does work. Have a go!

Article by Brian Roy Rosen

GET SOMETHING RUNNING - AND KEEP IT RUNNING: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VALROSABAHN (VRB)

We have a G-scale layout in our back garden in Dulwich (which isn't in Kent of course, and was once part of Surrey, albeit right on the Kent border, but there is no Area Group entirely within the M25, and the Surrey group meets are mostly as far from Dulwich as the Kent group ones). The layout is a rather disguised dumbbell-ish loop bent into a kind of U-shape, running across the top of the garden, and partly down each side. It proved fiendishly difficult and slow to build because the garden is narrow and its gradient greater than the realistic maximum for G-scale locos. On and off, it has taken me (and I don't exaggerate) about 25 years including landscaping, often doing only a little at a time, with parts of it having to be rebuilt at least once. Being a veteran member of the G-Scale Society (actually Member No.55), I date back to the founding of the G-Scale Society and having recently started with G-Scale was drawn to join by some of its 'founding fathers' at the Twickenham and Richmond Railway Club. But at that time, there was relatively little consensus core knowledge about building and running outdoor G-scale layouts with live track. So I've been through a lot of wheel-invention, blind-allying, and trial-and-error experience. I think it's said to be the famous railway modeller Peter Denny who is supposed to have said 'Get something running' and I soon learnt to add 'and keep it running too' as far as construction and reconstruction permit.

There have been several substantial obstacles to deal with, like the main garden shed and main garden paths, which all predated my decision to build a garden railway. Other obstacles, like our old apple tree, influenced the present shape of the layout at the time, though in that case, it subsequently died a long time ago. With the natural fall of the garden towards the house being so steep, I've had to offset this by raising much of the track base above garden level by up to about one metre. Like many London gardens, it is also narrow (about 7m). Yet, as if the garden wasn't challenging enough, I also made life more difficult for myself by eschewing LGB's R1 curves and points, and I've used only used R2s when I've had no easy alternative. While the track base itself has required much work, often involving work in cramped spaces, an additional factor has been landscaping it into the garden (I am as interested in gardening as I am in railways.) Nevertheless, I was determined to have a layout which provided for continuous running rather than A-to-B line. In addition to the track base, I have also been building a substantial water feature rockery, integrated with the track base, and with a water course about 7 m long which descends in stages to a pond. The line consists of a continuous run of around 55 m per circuit, and currently has 4 tunnels (formerly 5) and 3 bridges, one of the latter passing over a waterfall. There are two station areas, one built already and the other pending. The line is just discernible in Google Satellite view!

In the now-distant past, I had the fond illusion that this was to be a simple little line, to which end I built a simple small loop around a rockery, and then intended to get on with model-making and kit-bashing and perhaps even learn how to build a live steam loco. But I found myself wanting a more ambitious line, and so I become a small-scale civil engineer, learning instead about sand, ballast, cement, mortar, concrete, bricks and natural stone, and improving my woodwork. I sometimes tell people that I don't so much play with my trains as play with my track-base.

I started out building and running the line on analogue, as DCC was not commercially available for G-scale at the time. However, with only a very basic knowledge of circuitry, and worrying about just how long basic construction and wiring of the layout were going to take me, I became increasingly dismayed and daunted by the prospect of spaghetti-like runs of wiring, much of it having to criss-cross the garden underground, or housed in hidden conduits and junction boxes along the line. I realise for some railway modellers, the electrical side is part of the interest, but for me the main thing is seeing model trains running through a miniature landscape. I did get as far as building a central control box and a weatherproof housing for junction boxes on the first of the rockeries, but with much wiring left to do, my dilemma was to keep going with analogue for or face the outlay on DCC, including conversion of my locos. I finally succumbed to DCC however about three years ago. Though it's been quite costly to convert most of my loco stock, this has saved me the expense of analogue components, and that electrical spaghetti nightmare. I have recently also added an R/C battery loco. This is a pioneer conversion by Stuart Hithersay of Fosworks of the LGB track cleaner diesel. It has always struck me that in its 'as sold' form, this is a somewhat paradoxical loco, since like any other loco which picks up its power from the track, it only really works properly when the track has already been cleaned beforehand! (I guess most other G-scale users have wrestled with this 'track-cleaner enigma' in their time, too.) The battery conversion now saves me a lot of time wielding my manual track-cleaning contraption - a home-made adaptation of a long-arm window cleaner.



Ariel view of Brian's showing what can be achieved of the years

In our early days, we ran a medley of LGB rolling stock based in part on lines we had visited in Europe like the Rhaetian Railway (RhB) and the Zillertalbahn (ZB) but added other items we had taken a random fancy to. In any case, LGB used to have a somewhat whimsical approach (in my own opinion) to the models they created, because unlike the market for smaller scales, they seemed to provide too little support for anyone who wanted to run authentically-matched rakes of locos, carriages and freight wagons (e.g. the French Corpet Louvet tank engine is still not complemented by French carriages and wagons). Another problem was the marketing of the same basic rolling stock model in liveries of different lines which those items never ran on. Nevertheless, I started to move towards the idea of having a plausible story for our line, in order to narrow down what I chose to buy, and to have the challenge and satisfaction of trying to be as authentic as practically possible within the obvious limits of modelling in the garden. Fortunately, in more recent time, LGB-Märklin seems to have addressed these rolling stock problems, and my own interests are now quite well-catered for.

Over many years we have visited quite many European narrow-gauge lines, and like many other rail fans, we fell in love with the RhB in particular, as it also suited our pursuit of other interests like Alpine walking and natural history. In fact, we've walked along or near the RhB for many Km of its whole network. We stay as often as we can afford to at the nice family-run Grischuna Hotel at the end of the platform at Filisur, from where one can watch the 'little red trains' regularly making their way high up on the mountainside to reach the first of the Albula Valley spirals between there and Bergün. So, my line has been evolving towards a more self-consistent model of a 'might-have-been' railway, combined with a totally make-believe but (I hope) plausible heritage line.



Station roads for Valrosa station in the Swiss area, awaiting ballasting and construction of base board for the station building. One of the roads is a 'disguised' reverse loop

So why 'Valrosabahn'? Those familiar with the geography and railways of the canton of Graubünden in SE Switzerland and the neighbouring parts of Italy and Austria, might be interested in more details about this 'story' of our line. Note this is a multilingual area which is often reflected in the dual place names. The 'might-have-been' is the Ofenbergbahn, a RhB link through the from Zernez on the RhB's Engadin line through a pass in the mountains S of the Engadin, to the Vinschgau (Venosta) area of the largely German-speaking part of northern Italy (Süd Tirol). Here it would have met the standard gauge Vinschgerbahn at Mals/Malles. Versions of this scheme dates back (pre-1919) to when this part of Italy belonged to Austria. So far, so historically true, but the fiction begins here. Since the Ofenberg route was going to involve construction in the Swiss National Park, an alternative route was found through another valley on the Swiss side, Valrosa, and following RhB naming of different stretches built at different times (e.g. Berninabahn) this was to become the Valrosabahn. But work on the Austrian stretch commenced some time before the Swiss stretch and had progressed for about 10 Km almost to the Swiss border, and local steam train services had started to run over it. Unusually for Austria, this was a metre-gauge line in order to facilitate through-trains with the rest of the entirely metre-gauge RhB. However, international hostilities and the various economic crises in the first half of the 20th Century caused the RhB to discontinue their side of the project (as with several other mooted RhB projects around the same time). After Süd Tirol became part of Italy 1919 (true), the former Austrian stretch declined in use, and was eventually closed and left as a disused 'stub' with its rolling stock and infrastructure intact, but gradually disappearing into the undergrowth. In the second half of the century, it eventually attracted the attention of preservation enthusiasts, who with help from the Süd Tirol authorities restored the remaining rolling stock and buildings and brought the stub back to life, running Oldtimerfahrten (heritage trains). This in turn inspired the regional authorities on each side of the Swiss-Italian border to reconsider the idea of an Engadin-Vinschgau rail link using in part the Austrian stub. The Süd Tirol authorities agreed that the RhB could run its trains over the entire length of the line including the Italian side (as does the RhB's Bernina line to Tirano - true). In exchange, Süd Tirol negotiated for its heritage trains to continue to run, and to extend its services over the entire line into Switzerland, as far as RhB's own junction with the Engadin line. (The whole line also met, as truly planned, the regional standard-gauge Vinschgerbahn, closed in 1995 and reopened in 2005 at Mals.) Back to the Valrosabahn layout itself, the prototypical situation is not of course a continuous loop, which is why there is more there is more detail to this 'story, which can await another time. But the point of it is that it allows me to run typical trains of the RhB, including its own occasional heritage trains, as well as Austrian-style heritage trains. In the latter case, the trains also include the kind of eclectic mix of 'old-timer' stock from various countries within plausible limits, as with many narrow-gauge heritage lines elsewhere. On the 'Swiss' side, there will be an Engadin-style station by the waterfall, called Valrosa [a rendering of our street name]. On the 'Südtiroler (Italian, former Austrian)' side, I already have a station area called Waldstein/Forestarocchia [a bilingual

reference to the dense vegetation on our upper rockery]. Valrosa gives its name to the line itself (Valrosabahn), though the heritage line on the Italian side retains the name Ofenbergbahn when referred to as a separate entity.

Construction work in the garden continues, thanks at least in part to the sad loss of all our box hedges last year to a combination of box blight and a voracious moth invader from SE Asia, and in part to the new fence erected by our neighbours. Our line once ran right rather too close to this boundary in a tunnel through a large topiary box hedge (our very own version of Brunel's 'Box Tunnel'), but 'as one door closes, another opens'. So, this made a useful deviation possible, to move the track away from the boundary a bit, and to extend the passing loops for Valrosa station. Together with the necessary re-landscaping, this area is still a building-site.

At the same time, I have been able to return to a project I started over a year ago, which was to prepare for a spur to take the track bed from Valrosa area into what is currently our bike shed, over a removable bridge. Work for the spur has been a complex 3-D jigsaw project because it is located on a curve, and unavoidably coincides with the position of the hose from the pump in our water feature. The takes the water from our pond up to the head of the waterfall 2m above. The hose needs to be accessible for maintenance reasons, and which means the structure must be removable, while also providing a little shelf to support one end of the eventual bridge into the bike shed. After much drawing of templates and careful honing of irregular angles and curves of wooden items and cement insulation blocks, I have this last weekend just completed the basic work on this project.

There's not space to explain also some of the methods I've used or devised to build the railway, or the planting and landscaping, but by keeping my original small loop in the Italian area, and adding the longer one to it, I've been able to keep at least one loop in action, so just about managed to keep the Valrosabahn running over the years one way or another. We can't get to the Alps as often as we'd like, even before covid-19 struck, but for second best, we do now have the Alps in our garden, albeit not quite so mountainous. Despite some frustrations on the way, and almost ever-present construction sites along the line, the Valrosabahn has provided fun for us as well as for our children and grandchildren. It's just a pity, that just as we've reached a reasonable stage of fruition, covid-19 is currently making it much harder to share the fun of it with friends and family. My wife has just suggested we should rename it the 'Coronabahn'.



Temporary bridge over the Valrosa waterfall in the Swiss area. Landscaping, ballasting and a more authentic-looking bridge pending.



Recently realigned area with bridges on the north ramp, passing over a 'pebble stream' gorge in the Swiss area. Landscaping on left is temporary, pending better scaling of stonework.

Article by Glenn Allan

G Scale Engine Shed

Having previously built several buildings for my son-in-law's G scale layout that first appeared at Teynham a couple of years ago I was approached to see if I would be interested in building a loco shed for the Garden of England Railway owned by the Kent Group of the G Scale Society



I was given some basic parameters regarding size and finish, I found a suitable prototype, albeit made of brick, and adapted the plan to suit my normal building material, wood. Over the past 6 years I have made quite several other buildings, in 4mm, 7mm and G Scale, so this wouldn't be a problem or be unlikely to throw up anything I've not come across before. As per the 2 loco sheds I've made in G Scale the basic frames are made of wood from fruit/vegetable crates, plus some new milled timber, this keeps the cost down to not a lot above nothing. The size wanted was about 21" long, 11.5" wide and tall enough to accept a variety of LGB locos. I was loaned a Stainz engine as these, I understand, are some of the tallest when you take the smokestack into account.

The process is quite simple and straight forward, a basic box built to the size required with allowances to ensure it can take a bit of a beating while travelling or being taken off and put on the layout. It is important to ensure the basic box is square to start with, any variations can be built from this to give a more 'organic' result

The back and rear end are simply clad in vertical planks about 15mm wide. The plastic window frames were pre-made by my son-in-law, with additional horizontal bars added and clear plastic glued in behind. The door is made from more strips of timber, adjusted to fit in the opening, the hinges are from an old jewellery box. The sloped roof is a narrow pitch (37.5 degrees) with a solid support structure underneath. At the end is a raised vent section to let out the steam and smoke from any resident locomotives.

The roof is covered in wood shingles made from thin boxwood on top of a ply sheet. Once painted they look like clay roof tiles. The painting follows previous buildings, a back undercoat with thin coats of grey and white to give it an aged but looked after finish.



Front view with shed door open, which shows the boxwood strips making up the door and the Stainz loco to show the scale of the building, it should be able to house a Zillertal 0-6-2 loco with room to spare.



The roof detail, hopefully it looks more like terracotta tiles, the real thing would be expensive, fragile and heavy. There is a coating of soot round the vents at the end of the building. A $\frac{3}{4}$ view of the front, the door is a well-worn blue

The public side of the shed, the windows were modified to become 6 equal panes, the shed takes up most of the kitchen table. A solid door, the slot at the bottom allows for track to be installed and the door will still shut. The rear wall. Fruit crate wood comes already aged; other buildings have been worked on to increase the level of dilapidation. The roof is painted in a terracotta effect, the green moss is also painted so it isn't worn down by handling.

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