

# "I did it my way". Part 3, Roger Ellis admits that "I did it everybody else's way!"

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## Peter Marriott introduces Alpmitholz - a compact new HO scale layout.

Over the last decade or so most of the layouts that I have built have been end-to-end. For this layout I wanted to be able to just stand and watch the trains go by in an attractive setting to remind me of holidays in the Alps. And so it was that I built this compact layout that is simply a circle of track with a couple of storage sidings and a timber yard to add a little bit of operational interest.

The building of this layout has been extensively documented in *Model Rail* magazine as a series between March and October 2009 so I will not reiterate the construction techniques here. The layout was built as a Scottish Region line but it was always my intention to “convert” the line to a Swiss line following completion of the magazine series. At the time of writing I had not erected the catenary masts on the layout so it’s currently run as a diesel operated Swiss line. A rare commodity indeed! To satisfy my conscience I have envisaged that the single-track line could be somewhere like the Spiez to Zweisimmen line when the storms had reduced the line to diesel only operation. You are right, I am stretching my imagination just a little bit too far!!

I will conclude on the note that I intend to bring the layout to the 2010 Swiss AGM complete with locomotives in DCC sound mode. Please come along and introduce yourself and watch the trains go by. Hopefully it might remind you, too, of visits to our favourite country.

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## “I DID IT MY WAY” – Part 3 Roger Ellis admits that “I did it everybody else's way!”

In the first two parts of this trilogy I have covered the building of the baseboard and the wiring of the track, and so now in Part 3 we must endeavour to make it all look Swiss.

Peter Marriott has already covered the construction of catenary in the December 2008 and March 2009 *Swiss Express* magazines so all I need to add is to remember to install the overhead, and perhaps the signals as well, BEFORE you build the scenery.

Most of the major European kit manufacturers sell tunnel mouths of all shapes for all gauges but if you have catenary make sure you buy those that are meant for electric traction. Obvious, I know, but I have several tunnel mouths that will only take steam or diesel locomotives! When positioning the tunnel mouth ensure the longest coach you have on your layout will clear the tunnel wall,

especially if the feature is on a bend. Thin cardboard and brick paper will be adequate for the two or three inches of tunnel lining, but again check for clearance.

Retaining walls can be built from the tried and tested cardboard and brick paper method, but most of the companies such as Faller sell very acceptable alternatives albeit at a greater cost. If you look at railway walls they are hardly ever straight or vertical so don't concern yourself if they appear wonky. That will just be prototypical. When I built my first layout to achieve the profile of hills, mountains, lakes etc I cut plywood formers, but on reflection this was "over engineering" on a grand scale and cardboard secured by good old wood glue or PVA is more than sufficient. Again, cardboard strips glued over the top of the formers give a latticework grill which can be covered by magazine paper soaked in thick wallpaper paste. When dry apply another layer of paste with "Woodland Scenics" scatter material spread over and again leave to dry. However, this does not solve the problem of rock formations.

When I built my first scenic layout a certain Liliana Wood noticed a florist shop that was selling its display stock of cork bark, and I was able to negotiate the purchase of two full large black sacks at a most reasonable cost. These days Model Shops sell cork bark at stupid prices but the local florist may know of a wholesale supplier. This material does give instant results and with lichen stuffed into the cracks makes the formation of a rock face easy.

On my Hohtenn layout however I have used the Tony Bagwell method of rock formation featured in the December 2007 Swiss Express. I have owned up to this as the pictures accompanying this article are from Tony himself, otherwise I would have lied...and taken all the credit!

Create the formers as above but use chicken wire to cover them rather than cardboard strips. Use the pages from glossy magazines soaked in wallpaper paste to cover the chicken wire and leave to dry. I think two coverings should be enough. Here is the clever bit: for the area of rock you are about to create, cut a suitable size of fairly thick silver foil which you then crunch up into a ball and almost immediately open up. Take a mixture of "Artex" and cover the foil in a thin layer of, say, quarter of an inch, trying to make sure that the "Artex" gets into all the crevasses. Invert and press onto the mountain/hill you have

created and leave for at least 24 hours to dry. Peel off the silver foil and you have a rock surface. If there are gaps, and there will be, the "Artex" can be filled in with a craft knife and left to dry. This surface can be coloured with poster paint and, for example, Tony has used black to run over the formation to pick out the cracks in the rock. Again lichen and "Woodland Scenics" material can be used to add colour and variety.

As you will see from the pictures Tony is far more skilled than I am in the creation of scenery, but then I am too busy being featured in the pages of "Hello" and "OK" magazines! (*Dream-on Roger - more like "Goodbye" or "KO". Editor.*)

