

## Sundry Snippets 17 - Keeping it simple

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Editor Jim has asked for a “bit more on coaches” for this issue, and as I know nothing about modern coaches it will have to be about the old-timers. Anyway, as the last article on the Australian Radials was a bit complicated, I feel a return to simplicity is due. Most of my stock is of the short wheelbase variety with four wheels, where one fixed axle and one on a simple pivot is quite adequate.

*Photo 1* shows a coach from the ‘classic’ Triang Rocket set, with a large part of the chassis milled and carved out to give that spindly look so typical of the early underframes.

The coach needs to be clamped on its side in a vice using one-inch blocks of the soft white polystyrene packing that comes around televisions, fridges, and so on. This will not damage the vehicle, yet is firm enough to allow a small milling cutter to clean out all the unwanted plastic round the springs *without* breaking any. The chassis cut-outs above the springs have been cleaned right out, and a batch of new buffers has been turned with extensions to simulate the rod which runs the length of the chassis and connects the buffers at each end. The shock absorbing springs are in the centre, hidden behind the solid bit under the centre compartment.

*Photo 2* shows two vehicles of a rake of five (all different) for the P.L.M. railway of France. The plastikard bodies are done in layers to produce the panels; the chassis is scratch-built from nickel silver; while axle boxes, buffers and oil lamps are cast from masters in white metal – by a friend from Mikes Models days! The four-wheel coach was given suspension in the same way as the Triang one, but the rest of the rake has six wheels, so what could be done about that?

I have got most of the *Scalefour News* issues from the early days, with all their technical chat, and quite few of the *Model Railway Journals*, so I did a trawl through to see what ideas I could pinch, on the basis that nothing in the world of model railways is really ‘new’; and it is an unwise body who claims originality anyway!

After a few hours of page-turning, and quite a lot of time being side-tracked to other interesting items, I found lots of variations of wonderful schemes to connect the centre axle to the other pair with all kinds of sliding plates, tension rods, springs, and torque bars. All wonderful stuff and *far* more complicated than it need be. So I thought “let us have a look at it from the lazy man’s point of view”. So what is it that we want to do?

Well, to find means of keeping six wheels on the track with the minimum of fuss. And to do that, do we *need* the centre axle? Well, yes, but only cosmetically, so let us treat it as we would a four-wheel coach, that is, letting the centre axle run free. This is done in a simple pair of stirrups from bent wire, which serve to keep the axle in line with the axlebox while allowing it to go up and down and side to side, as the mood takes it. Simple and very cheap. *Photo 3* says it all!