

Dave Round

Creating a new scenic area for Shottesford Mill

The current national emergency, surrounding the pandemic, has given a boost to the continuation of scenic work on my layout, Shottesford Mill. Following the upheaval of the house renovations last year, when everything was dumped in the garage, along with the layout, time was spent clearing out the rubbish and re-erecting the main areas for work to continue.

After its last exhibition in 2019, plans were formulated to improve the scenic section of the layout. One of the major items was that the white chalk cutting faces were too white, as though they had just been cut through the hillside. I was aware of this some time ago. Time of course is the key to doing all the small details that brings a layout to life.

Where to start? I really wanted to take the module, known as Park Bank, which has the canal and pub on it and complete the grass field area at the bottom of the hillside. Something different was required here. Of course, I am one of the lucky ones, being in an age range of people the government deemed as vulnerable to the pandemic.

So with time on my hands a start was made by cutting into the grassed area, for a brook that is spring fed, from the bottom of the hillside, alongside the railway supporting wall and then runs diagonally across the board to its leading edge. This is a shallow feature and breaks up the large green grass area. As we all know areas like this would have longer unkempt grass around the edges and this been achieved by using hanging basket liner. No expense spared here!

The brook was created by painting the base a light brown, with green strands of paint, to replicate the weed that grows in the natural direction of the flow of the water. The whole lot was 'painted in' with an eye dropper containing quick dry matt varnish and left to dry overnight. When I cut the grass away for the stream the PVA I used previously had rolled up under the grass matting and provided a ripple effect. Once the varnish had set, I touched the leading edges in of the ripples with white paint, to give a 'movement of water' effect.

The next stage was to create some footpaths to give the whole thing a natural look. This leads from the tow path, up the steps and onto the hillsides. I have used a free source of sieved grit to achieve this. The source? cleaning out the gutters! The colour is good and naturally blends into the surroundings.

The final work so far, has been those chalk faces. How to dirty them, without losing the basic white colour? Décor Art do a colour, called Country Maple. I was introduced to this product by a friend whose wife enjoys painting. It is almost earth colour, and is very useful for dulling down areas. I applied this with a 00-size brush to paint in the cliff face texture. It took a while!

The final job is to mix some Hornby acrylic green paint, No RC 408, with a small drop of diluted PVA, to give several washes to the faces. This finds its way into all the nooks and crannies, thus breaking up the sheer white face I started out with.

So now we have the basis of a quiet garden, at the bottom of the hillside. Cliff faces that look genuine, and blending naturally into the cuttings. The garden area requires fitting out, with a couple of seats etc. This area is currently known as Isolation Garden, to commemorate, the lockdown! So, a rewarding few weeks, that will enhance the layout.