

BRICKISH ASSOCIATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Tony Priestman, Chairperson

Welcome to the Brickish Association, and to the first issue of our newsletter.

It is an immense pleasure to be able to write those words. A lot has happened in 2002, leading up to this moment. I would like to spend a few minutes giving you all some background, and then explain where I hope the Association is heading in the near future.

The formation of the Association is closely tied to the Red Letter Days (RLDs) that many of us have attended this year. After the first one, in May, a group of us thought we would make the most of the contacts we had made, and arranged a meeting with LEGO.

We wanted to share our collective creativity by putting on a display at LEGOLAND Windsor (LLW), and of course get access to LEGO Heaven again! The meeting was very helpful, but we came away without very much in the way of commitment from LEGO. It was very apparent that apart from the five of us who attended, we had no commitment from anyone, and no idea of the number of people who would be interested in

supporting either a display at LLW, or even further RLD-style events. This was where the idea of the Association was born.

There is a big difference between an idea and reality, though. The first step was 'hijacking' a Red Letter Day, by filling it with us lot, thus showing that we could muster a high level of support.

It was at this event, at the beginning of August, that I was cornered by Charlotte Wiberg from LEGO Direct. Charlotte and I have spoken several times, and she suggested that forming a club would be a very good idea.

So we did

There has been a lot of hard work put into the 'infrastructure' of the association: the name (that took ages!), the constitution (even longer), the website (sweat and tears), and this newsletter being the most obvious examples. We hope you like it. But if you don't, please let us know. Everything is new, so we expect to make changes.

Our goals are much broader than just putting on a show at LLW, and getting into the stock-room again. We want to build a true community,

and really show what that community is capable of. So expect competitions, events (both local and national) and a bit of banter.

In the New Year, we will be talking to LEGO again, with a view to getting some events organised for later in the year. An AGM is planned for after Easter, to be held at a central location. To include a big fest and at least one building competition. Look out for more announcements.

We also hope that, as in the past, some of you will organise local or national events as well. We will give you all the support we can.

The recent LEGOWorld event in the Netherlands shows what is possible. The Dutch have a club of 400+ members. By publicising ourselves and what we do at events, like the recent Great Western LEGO Train Show (GWLTS), and getting into the papers, or even on television, we hope to reach people by as many ways as possible. To show them that there are more of us than most people think. Also that we are a friendly community, and being part of this community is fun!

This could be the start of something big



Castle class locomotive by Jason Railton

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Editor's letter

Welcome to the first edition of the Brick Issue, the newsletter of the Brickish Association. The aim of the Brick Issue is to provide a forum for articles about LEGO and subjects related to LEGO, in a format that is easily readable by all. The Brickish Association is not limited to people with web access and the Brick Issue will cater for those without access to the web. We also aim to provide a document that can be used as a resource and feature articles that are more suited to a newsletter format.

We hope to feature reviews of LEGO products, shows and displays, as well as "how-to" articles and building suggestions.

However, we need you as members to participate in this exchange of ideas to make the Brick Issue successful.

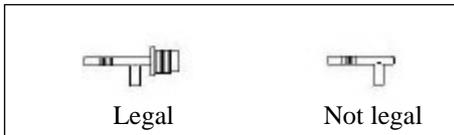
Regards Mark Palmer, Editor

ILLEGAL MOVES – AN EXPLANATION

By Peter Reid

As far back as I can remember, “illegal moves” (cutting, painting of LEGO etc.) have been part of playing with LEGO. When I was very young, I would use Plasticine to bring detail to my games. It could be made into anything, food, leaking intestines, alien cocoons...you name it. Plasticine was, admittedly, a messy substance, but back then I didn't care about mess, as long as I had fun.

My childhood Lego pal was Rhys, and he was the one who first dared to really enhance his Legomen. The techniques he pioneered are still used by me to this day, and for his vision, I thank him. One of the earliest illegal moves was a reaction to the lack of decent guns for our men. We were raised on Star Wars, and our guys needed blasters. It's such an obvious, brilliantly simple move that many of my heroes still carry them:



The Lego piece on the right has had the ‘cup’ removed.

It makes a truly superb hand weapon, and the cup can easily be re-used.

Rhys began to get more ambitious, making paper holsters for the new weapons, and shamelessly using paint on Lego pieces. Soon, Rhys felt the need to paint his own computers (we were eighties children and the choice wasn't great) on 2x2 45-degree slopes. These custom computers were, as I recall, excellent. Further techniques for illegal



moves were learned when we discovered Games Workshop. A period of immersion in the war-gaming lifestyle taught us how to do all sorts of nasty things to plastic. Soon, it was second nature to use glue, a knife or a file on Lego. The fine detail skill of painting allowed for custom paint jobs for evil minifig heads, back when every Legoman had a smile.

Then came the final piece of the puzzle, the discovery of Milliput. Milliput is a fine two-part modeling clay, which dries

Moon face - grumpy



almost as hard as stone. Rhys was the first to try making his own minifig alien heads, and the basic idea was so good it has needed almost no refinement over nearly 15 years. The first ever alien head sculpts are doubtless still in his room somewhere, and are probably still in excellent condition. Custom heads are hard wearing, a coat of paint and varnish making them well able to

withstand the rigours of regular play.

It was around this time Rhys invented the Cyrians. The early models were little more than a painted eye and stalk on top of a Legoman head. Amazingly, these creatures are still being made, and the longevity of the species is probably due to the ease with which they are made. A tiny Milliput sausage, a tiny Milliput ball, an old faded head and a lick of paint – another Cyrian joins the ranks.

In the old days, these conversions allowed my classic space men to fight a truly different enemy. The original Blacktron were, after all, merely human underneath their visors. It was nice to have a choice of intergalactic life form to play with.

These days, kids have it easy. They've got the option of playing with all types of officially produced alien; the Life On Mars range offers an entire cross section of the (ahem) Martian species. And of course, the Star Wars range offers a multitude of choices, from Ewoks to Gungans. These are, essentially, the same idea as my aliens, but official heads are supplied unpainted, and I cannot help wonder if the kids of today ever have a go at detailing them...

I realise a lot of AFOLs (Adult Fan Of LEGO) frown on the practice of illegal moves, perhaps thinking it a perversion of the

Lego creed. And maybe they are right; maybe all these illicit modifications are fundamentally wrong. But I've come so far now, and I am strangely proud of my alien hordes and fully articulated robots. I don't mess Lego up for the sake of it, I only perform surgery to enhance the main bulk of my stuff.

Anyway, I believe a large percentage of

AFOLs are as guilty as me. How many of you can honestly say you've never cut, glued or painted bricks? What about Technic pipe? What about the people who use Brasso to remove print? Or those of you who make custom stickers?

The master builders at LEGOLand are also guilty, and I am not referring to the glue or window cheating. Look closely at the presentation models at the next Red Letter Day; there are illegal moves galore! During the last Red Letter Day, chief model maker Guy Bagley told us that any of his underlings who were discovered making dubious moves were forced to buy cakes for the rest of the team. Judging by my record, I probably owe every single AFOL at least a hundred cakes each. But I am convinced that many of you who are reading this also need to get yourselves down the baker's, sharpish.



LEGO is life.....

THE BRICKISH ASSOCIATION WEBSITE:- <http://www.brickish.org>

Huw Millington, Vice-Chairman and webmaster

If you have not done so already, be sure to visit the association's website, which has been set up to serve two purposes. First, it acts as a public showcase where we publish news about the club, extol the virtues of becoming a member, advertise forthcoming events and maintain links to member's websites and those of affiliated clubs.

Perhaps more significantly, it also provides members-only facilities which are intended to become the focal point for member-to-member interaction on the Internet. These features are still very much in their infancy. At present a fully-featured discussion forum system is available allowing you to join in discussions on a wide variety of LEGO-related subjects including: the association: shopping for LEGO in the UK: past and future events: current happenings at LEGOLAND Windsor (LLW), and the bulk selection at the LEGO Brand Shop in Milton Keynes (LSMK). This site is not intended to replace Lugnet, but to complement it. Because our forums are available to members only we can discuss things that cannot be aired in public, such as event planning and so on.

Members can also view a list of other members (who have elected to be included) showing e-mail addresses and location, so you can at last find out who has been raiding your local toy shop before you get there!

I am open to suggestions for features you would like to see on the website, and also for new discussion topics. I have a few ideas, and as time permits these will be introduced. These include:

- Shared bookmarks – a list of links to other LEGO-related sites contributed to by members. Contributors will be able to elect to have them visible on the public side of the website
- File repository – a facility for members to upload documents and possibly images for sharing with others. This will not be a Brickshelf replacement, but somewhere where we can keep Association documents, meeting minutes, event plans, bulk assortment inventories and so on
- Events calendar - at the moment this is manually updated, but I would like to make it possible for all members to contribute to it.

I have also been toying with the idea of some sort of BrickTrader application whereby members can list sets and parts they wish to trade with other members. For example surplus parts obtained from Red Letter Days events can be swapped with other members without fear of alerting non-members to their availability, (just how many transparent jumpers do I need anyway...)

If this would be of interest to you or you have ideas for additional features please let me know. Send email to hmillington@btinternet.com



Tony Priestman's pirate ship. Photo by Huw Millington

NBLTC MODULES

By Mark Palmer

Introduction

The idea of using a standard sized module for train shows has been used by US LEGO train clubs for sometime. The North British Lego Train Club (NBLTC) has adapted the idea to fit the different constraints of the UK, such as smaller doorways.

Why?

Using modules has the advantage of providing a flat, consistent, and stable platform for train layouts. Anyone who has set out LEGO track on the floor, or assorted tables, will understand the difficulties an uneven surface can cause to the smooth running of trains. By providing a specification for the module, modules can be brought together at a meeting or display and be fitted together to produce a large layout. As demonstrated at several NBLTC train displays.

Basic module, (upside down)



Dimensions

The dimensions were determined by Jon Reynolds and Tony Priestman after much thought and experimentation. The dimensions of the modules have to take into account various factors: LEGO brick (or stud) dimensions - a module needs to be an exact number of studs in width and length.; Track dimensions and geometry - for simplicity it is helpful if the module is a whole number of track sections in width and length. Finally, transport should be considered - modules should be able to fit in cars and through doors. An area where our US cousins have an advantage.

The dimensions are 1277mm by 638mm, or 160 x 80 studs, or 5 x 10 track lengths. By making the modules twice as long as they are wide they can be considered similar to a 2x4 brick and modules can then be arranged in a multitude of ways. The height to the top of the baseboard is 900mm. Specifications are given for fixing holes.

Construction

The simplest way to make a module is to use a framework of 18mm x 70mm (.75" x 3") planed softwood with a top of 6mm MDF. There is a cutting plan available to enable you to construct 3 modules from a single 8' x 4' piece of MDF but it's easier to just cut a single 1277mm x 638mm board. The major D.I.Y. "sheds" will cut the boards to size, but check that the cuts are accurate. A further longitudinal spa, in 18mm by 70mm, is also a good idea to add strength. For my modules I added smaller spas in 6mm MDF, cut into 60mm wide strips. The airframe style holes are optional! (See pictures for details.) This can all be screwed and glued, although at least one builder of modules only glues the tops. I reinforced the joints with a fillet of "No-Nails". For a finish various paints have been used, gloss tends to be too soft, especially the "once" types, satinwood is a good choice but again susceptible to scratches, varnish is a good alternative. In

reality only the top of the sides will actually be seen, if the module is covered in baseplates. Paint colour is hotly debated but a good choice is light grey. I highly recommend painting the underside with varnish to protect against damp.

No special tools or skills are required to build modules. Although an electric drill, screwdriver etc speed things up. A good 10mm wood bit is highly recommended. I had the advantage of a vertical drill stand and an electric cutting off saw.

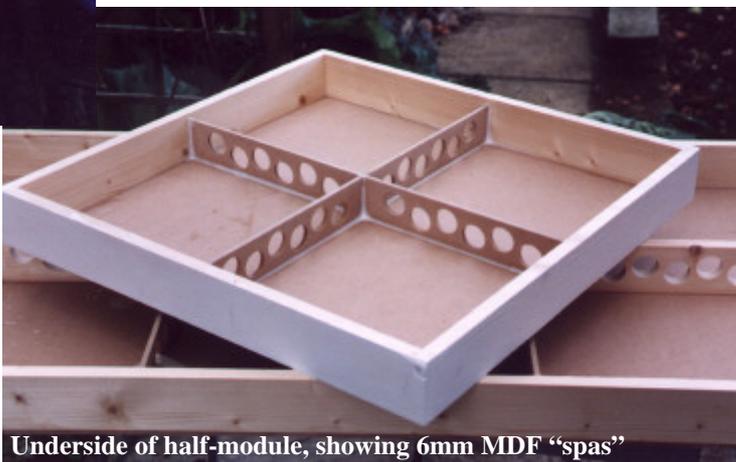
Cost should be about £20 per module and take about a day to construct.

Transport and storage

Do consider transporting and storing the modules. I was very surprised that a module only just fitted in the back of a Land Rover Discovery. Also storing modules, plus legs, takes up a lot of room. If this is an issue consider building half-modules.

My Own Modules (MOMs)

The first thing you get when you define a specification is people taking the specification to the limit and beyond! As long as you keep to the width or length dimensions, and the spacings for fixing holes all, sorts of modules are possible. A half-module, 638 x 638mm is the easiest, curved modules are also possible. Varieties of drop modules to cater for



Underside of half-module, showing 6mm MDF "spas"

bridges have also been constructed. As standard modules can be thought of as a 2x4 the half-module is 2x2 and discussion are already underway for 1x4 modules.

Other uses

Although primarily aimed at train displays the modules can also be used for any form of display and are a very convenient size for building.

Resources

The NBLTC web site <http://www.nbltc.org> has a section on building modules and also links to PDF documents detailing dimensions etc. Alternatively please contact me for hardcopy.



Corner modules under construction

BUILDING THE A4 MALLARD IN LEGO

By Jon Reynolds

This is my first attempt at a MOC steam engine and to my own folly, a more challenging project for a first go is hard to imagine. As man and boy I have been fascinated by impressive machinery so a Gresley Streamliner it had to be, skirts and all!

The most challenging aspects of building a A4 in LEGO are:

- Large driving wheels
- Articulation within the confines of the skirts
- That streamlined smokebox

About a third of the 24 hours spent building this model were spent on the chassis alone, which at the end of it all looks like it was thrown together. After a few abortive attempts at building a prototypical '4-6-2' wheel pivoting arrangement, I decided that a '2-4-4-2' arrangement which looked like a '4-6-2' would work best as it was easier to balance the weight of the loco body over the two main pivot points. The large 1970's spoked wheels were used. These have fine inside and outside flanges and are prone to jumping the track, so balance and weight distribution dictated much of the design. For rapid assembly adjustments, the chassis has been built as a separate easily-detachable unit - this feature became very useful when rebuilding the skirts for the nineteenth time!

The body was built to suit the chassis and as such is slightly under scale length. However, within the actual built length I have proportioned the cab, boiler and smokebox in accordance with photographs of the prototype. It is in the length of the loco that the restriction of width to 7 wide (excluding skirts) has been chosen - 6 wide would have resulted in a massive outward jump in width around the skirts, 8 wide would have meant that the loco and tender would have looked too short and stubby (54 studs long in present form). The boiler is 5 wide over most of its length but this tapers to 4-wide at the front of the smokebox with the main body tapering to 6 wide in the same area to capture the

look of the A4, I wanted to incorporate the following items, above any others, which, for me define the shape:

1. The slight vertical drop in the boiler top which starts about half way along
2. The rounded leading edge of the chimney
3. The narrowing of the smokebox profile below the centre line
4. The chevron-shaped cab roof
5. The curved profile of the footplate and skirts along the body

Of these, 5 was the most time consuming pain-in-the-boiler you can ever imagine, made worse as a result of my 7-wide philosophy. As it happens, I can only just coax the heavy body around the track by the single motor in the tender drive unit. Sometimes the main drivers bind against the skirts and effectively put the brakes on around the corners - as if there was not enough resistance to begin with!

The tender unit was literally thrown together in a couple of hours but taking this into account I'm reasonably pleased with it. The main features are the attempt to replicate the chevron-shaped fairings atop the tender, the 'LNER' lettering and the end detail with corridor connection, look-out window and foot holds. Due to the restricted length I have had to use a 3-axle layout rather than the prototypical 4-axle system. But I am more concerned with traction than looks here - even with the 7 wide body I have had to build in two 2x6x2 weight bricks to provide this.

Cab detailing has been left for the moment as the project has not been a resounding success. Although the difficulties of the complicated shape have been largely overcome, I am not satisfied with the reliability of operation. Unless LEGO start making proper large train wheels, I can only envisage a total re-design with more emphasis on function and less on realism. It's been an interesting project but attendees of the next NBLTC show are more likely to see this as a static display poking out of an engine shed rather than in operation at 126 mph!



A4 Mallard leaving the station. Photo taken at Southport NBLTC display

5 MINUTE MODELS

1. The mini-skip, by Huw Millington

Here's how to build one:



No industrial or town scene is complete without one, but modeling a small skip of the type that can be seen all over the country in LEGO requires a bit of ingenuity. My first attempt at one, for my wagon repair shop [1], was somewhat oversized and fragile, so for my GWLTS module I had another go and came up with this design. It doesn't look much when empty, but once filled with old bits of chain, light-saber handles discarded by one-armed Jedi and unwanted 1x1 brown plates it looks just the part.

[1] <http://www.brickset.com/huwhomepage/moc/trains/wrs/>



These are the parts you need, they don't have to be yellow!

Assemble the base



Complete min-skip showing false bottom.

Why not build a truck to lift and haul it as well?

If you have built a small model you are particularly pleased with, please send a few notes and pictures of it to the editor for a future 5 Minute Model article.



4x4's at play, models and photo Mark Palmer

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