

Annual LEGO Festival and General Meeting

Tony Priestman, Chairperson (chairman@brickish.org)

When?

Saturday the 26th of April, from early till late.

Where?

Dilhorne village hall, near Stoke-on-Trent. We picked this location because

- a it's relatively central
- b it has good transport links
- c it was known about by one of the committee.

What?

The AGM itself will take place in the late afternoon. There will be reports by the Chairman and the Treasurer, elections for the Chairman and Treasurer, and exceptionally this year, also for the President, and there may be amendments to the constitution. The rest of the day and evening will be given over to LEGO fun and games.

Displays:

- A large train layout, and a display area
- Star Wars display

- Technic display
- Hogwart's Castle, and other Castle displays
- An array of shop display models.

(If you're bringing along your own items for display, please let us know, so we can allow enough space.)

Competitions:

- Bridge Building Competition - see the rules on the web-site.
- Timed Building - copy a LLW hockey player as fast as you can!
- Building Race - build a set inside its sealed bag while everyone else rustles, crackles and curses around you at the same time.
- Guess the number of 1x1 plates in a milk bottle.

Trading:

- A trading post for buying and selling bits and sets.

Food and Drink:

- Tea and coffee will be provided free all day.

- There will be a selection of hot and cold snacks available (for a small contribution) at lunchtime.
- We will be having a three course dinner in the evening, which must be pre-booked, and will cost £5.00 or £3.50 for children.

Why?

Our constitution specifies that we must have a AGM each year. As this is the first one, it will be a bit different, in that we (the committee) will be asking you (the members) to confirm that we have been doing the right things so far, and setting out what we will be trying to achieve in the future.

How?

The hall has been paid for with your subscriptions. Please come along and get your money's worth! It will be a great occasion with lots going on and a wonderful opportunity to meet some of the other members.

So make a date in your calendar and get building.



Brickish Association display at LLW

To contact the editor:

email: newsletter@brickish.org
 or post: 48 Garraways
 Wootton Bassett
 Wiltshire
 SN4 8LL

Editor's letter

Welcome to the second edition of the Brick Issue, the newsletter of the Brickish Association. In this issue we cover subjects ranging from building tips to personal recollections of older sets. The aim is to address all aspects of the AFOL hobby. Simon's nostalgic article certainly had me thinking about my early LEGO sets, e.g. 335 Transport Truck from the early seventies. What sets do you remember from your childhood, what sets brought you out of your "dark ages"?

I would like to have more feedback for what you want to see in the newsletter and the offer of articles will always be welcome.

Regards Mark Palmer, Editor

News in Brief

- The Brickish Association was invited to display some members' creations (and I hope gain some new recruits) at the LEGO Club 'Meet the Modelmakers' event at LEGOLand Windsor over the weekend of the 4th and 5th of January 2003. Six members of the association travelled to Windsor for the weekend, taking models as diverse as a minifig scale Hogwarts Castle and a fully functional Technic airport plane 'tug'. During the event, we had a great deal of fun alongside the modelmakers and LEGO Club staff, helping the LEGO Club members to build Miniland scale ice hockey players. We also handed out over 80 leaflets and membership forms to interested parents, and a similar number of Brickish Association badges. We actually signed up four new members over the weekend!
- The Red Duplo Brick competition is up and running! All you need to do is take a picture of a red Duplo brick in the most unusual place possible. See the rules elsewhere in this issue.
- Following on from the January event, we have been invited to provide a manned display at LLW again. We will be there on the weekend of the 12th/13th of April, the weekend before Easter. This time, it's not in conjunction with the LEGO Club, but at the direct invitation of the park.
- The website has now moved to its permanent home, on server space provided free by Northstar Computing. Many thanks to our vice chairman, Huw Millington, for giving it a home at www.brickset.com until the hosting was sorted out, and to member Larry Pieniazek for putting us in contact with Eric Smith at Northstar. Huw is now recommending Northstar to everyone, so if you need web hosting services, look them up and say we sent you!
- The Brickish Association now has over 50 members! In mid-February the 50th member joined, and we continue to gain new members at a rate of 1-2 a week.
- After some discussions with the UK Specialist Sales Manager at LEGOLand Windsor, it appears that we will be unable to hold a Brickish event in the park this year. This is obviously disappointing news. There are several reasons why we have not been able to arrange an event. Having only formed the Association last October, we were too late to express an interest for this year, and the park's diary of events and staff availability has meant that they can't fit us in. We remain hopeful that we can do something next year, and will be contacting the park management again later this year. Meanwhile, we will have to rely on the Red Letter Day events to satisfy our lust for bricks.
- The Brickish Association has teamed up with LEGOLAND Windsor to bring members reduced price admission at partners concession rates, which represent a saving of up to 40%. Tickets are priced at £13.95 for adults and £12.95 for children for the whole season: peak and off-peak. Full details on how to take advantage of this great offer can be found in the Documents area of the website.

Red Duplo Brick Competition

Rules:

1. One red Duplo brick, to be photographed in the most unlikely places possible.
2. Entries to be submitted either by post to the Secretary, or you can post a link on the website.
3. Entries will be judged every three months, and the winning picture will be posted on the website and published in The Brick Issue.
4. The best entry over the whole year will win a prize, to be presented at the AGM.
5. Entries will be judged by the Committee.
6. The cut off day for entries will be the end of the last day of February, May, August and November.

This issues winner is (*embarrassed cough*) Mark Palmer, and yes I really did drive a Land-Rover over the brick!



Seminal Sets

By Simon Bennett

I thought it would be fun to share with you the sets that were most important to me and also perhaps, in committing this to paper, remember some of the great times I had playing with LEGO as a child.

378 - Tractor and Trailer

This is the first set I can remember being given. I am pretty sure I was given it by my Grandad, who died in 1975 so I must have been about four. There was no unionisation debate raging then so the combined chassis/steering/front axle POOP arrived without comment! Simply fantastic, the beginning of something wonderful; my obsession with the brick.

385 - Jeep and Trailer

Hmm, another 'juniorized' set with that 'chassis, steering and wheel block' part. This was the first set I had two of, because my grandparents in Chelmsford kept a box of LEGO for when I visited and when they bought me sets they stayed there. Interestingly because I did not play with it as often my 'Granny's House' Lego has survived much more intact. I have two of the 663 hovercrafts, the 691 red helicopter, the 697 stagecoach and this model, all in near mint condition.

Weetabix promotional sets

These seemed to have a huge number of bricks. I built so many variations of buildings using these and the other bricks in my collection. They were superb value, and would have still been superb value if they had not been free!

853 Tractor

I cannot express how much of a revelation Technical Lego was, the new gears and axles suddenly enabled me to do real mechanical stuff. Though the 850 forklift was the first Technical set I got this was better as it was so much more realistic. It also had the power take-off feature and the instructions for various farm machinery. Based on my Britain's toys I tried to come up with some MOCs, like a baler and a muckspreader, to make use of this but I was too young and inexperienced. Perhaps I should build it again and have another go.

6890 Cosmic Cruiser

This set kind of represents all the classic space I had, it's just the right size, has that groovy 'two vehicles in one' thing going on and I just loved it. My Dad made me sell all my Space Lego when I got 'too old' and I still regret not keeping this. I did keep my 6980 Galaxy Commander though, how cool was that thing!

8860 Car Chassis

In 1980, aged 9, I received the best Christmas present I ever had. This thing was a technological

marvel, everything seemed to work on it. Suspension! Gearbox! Even the reclining seats. I can remember that when I got it my parents had not wrapped it and put it under the tree but had hidden it in a cupboard underneath the television. I imagine this was because it was so big and they knew that if I shook it and it made that all-important shuffling sound I would stand a good chance of dying of anticipation before Christmas Day.

8412 Sky Wasp

This was the set that awoke me from my Dark Ages. I bought it at a small toy shop in Bourton on



the Water while on a weekend away with friends. The flex system intrigued me and I thought the price was very reasonable, useful as I had just left University and had only just got my first real job. What a slippery slope it led me down though, from the 8880 only a few months later to this point, where I have just received delivery of my 10030 Imperial Star Destroyer.

8516 Boss Roborider

Awful as it is it deserves a place here as the first set I bought specifically to split for parts. Half price at Toys R Us it represented an easy way to get a couple of sliding dog clutches for use in putting Ross Crawford's gearbox modification into my Silver Champion. (Not that I've actually got round to doing it yet... Next time I build it, I promise.)

3723 Mini-figure

My 30 Birthday present from a large group of my friends, easily one of the top five best presents I've ever been given. I built him Christmas Day 2001 and, though I've modified him to make his legs work, he is still built now.

I hope this has been an interesting look at some classic sets, from several themes. Now ask yourself, what were the milestone models in your life?

LEGO Software Power Tools:

by Kevin Clague, Miguel Agullo and Lars Hassing.

Reviewed By Huw Millington

The time comes to us all when we need to dismantle a masterpiece and use the pieces for our latest project. But what if you want to build it again, or share your model with others? Photographs help, but often don't reveal enough details to guarantee that it can be replicated. In 1995, a young Australian, James Jessiman, had exactly this problem, so he developed a method of describing LEGO parts and models in a text file and a program, LDraw, to display them on screen. Unfortunately Jessiman died only two years later, but his LDraw legacy lives on. There are now many programs for creating, processing and displaying LDraw files. This book and accompanying CD-ROM describes the best of them.

The tools covered are MLCAD, a Windows 3D CAD program for generating LDraw files, LSynth, written by Kevin Clague for modeling flexible LEGO parts, L3P, a utility for creating files suitable for input to POV-Ray, a general purpose ray tracing program, and LPub, also written by Clague, which considerably simplifies using these tools to create high quality model instructions.

Getting started in virtual LEGO modeling and acquiring and installing the tools required can be daunting to the computer novice, and it is in this area that this book excels. The CDROM contains all the programs mentioned above, and a neat program that makes installing them a breeze.

After a brief chapter on the history of LDraw, the book begins in earnest with three chapters on MLCAD, which takes up about half of the book. This is of course entirely justified because most of the virtual modeller's time will be spent using MLCAD. Although it is easy to grasp the basics, the program offers many advanced features which are clearly explained in this book. Even though I have been using it for several years, I still learned some neat tricks and shortcuts, and MPDs are a mystery no more...

Next up is a short chapter on LSynth, which I hadn't used before for fear of it being too difficult. I needn't have worried because after reading this book, I can create flexible hoses with the best of them.

The next part of the book, and the software it describes, is concerned with generating photo-realistic images from LDraw files. A chapter covers both L3P and POV-Ray. You are unlikely to use much of the information here directly, such as the L3P command line switches, but understanding them helps make sense of the options in LPub. At first glance the LPub interface can feel a bit bewildering with its nested tabbed interface and plethora of options, but they are all explained in the chapter devoted to it, and after reading it you'll be

able to produce high quality ray-traced images of your virtual models with ease.

Finally, a large chunk of the book, 70 pages, is devoted to one of Clague's models: a Mindstorms based AT-ST 2-legged walker. The excuse for this is that it shows the tools being used together to document a complex model, but I can't help thinking that it is a cast off from one of the authors' Mindstorms books.

If you have not yet ventured into the wonderful world of LEGO CAD, I can without hesitation recommend this book to you. You are the target audience. If, like me, you've been using the software described on and off for several years and have downloaded and struggled with the tools already, there is less to recommend it, although it is still a good read and you are likely to pick up a few things you didn't already know. Having all the software in one place is certainly a bonus, although since this book was published there are already new versions of MLCAD (v3), LSynth and LPub available, so it's likely that you'll want to update them in time.

After waiting for years, two books on virtual LEGO modeling come along almost at once. The next, Virtual LEGO by Tim Courtney et. al, is due in May. It will be interesting to see how it compares to this one.



Available from amazon.co.uk
price £26.95
ISBN: 1-931836-76-0

NOTE: the rendered images used to illustrate the '5 Minute Models' were produced by Huw using these programs.

Round the Bend - LEGO Flex

By Stuart Jones

Welcome to the world of AFOFs - Adult Fans of Flex. I've been experimenting with Flex to operate some of my railway models, and I hope this article gives you some ideas and hints about using Flex with LEGO Trains and other models.

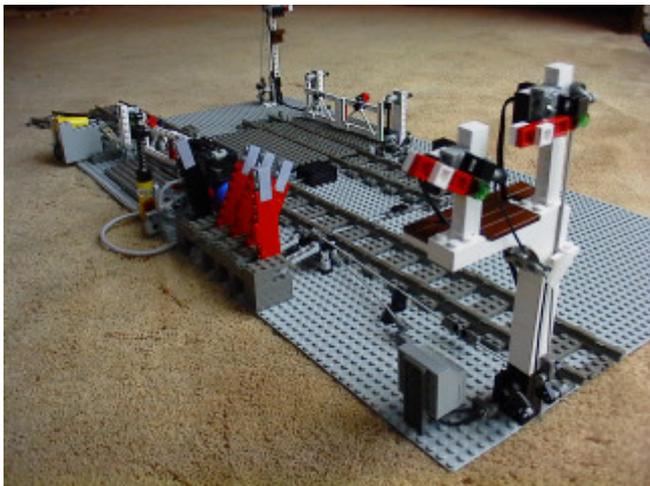
What do you get for your money?

The pack (5118) from Shop-at-Home contains:

- 6 Flex wires, of various lengths
- 6 Flex tubes, of various lengths
- 10 standard Flex connectors (no. 6643)
- 2 towball-end Flex connectors (no. 6644)
- 12 Technic ½ pins (no. 4274)

The wires are 2 mm diameter, moulded in a flexible (unsurprisingly) light gray. The dark gray tubes are the same diameter as Lego bars such as the Light Saber, so fit into clips. The connectors take standard Technic pins, and will clip onto a LEGO stud. Current connectors have a small closing catch, but you might also find the older style 'open groove' connectors.

You can run the wires within the tubes, or for a finer appearance, just use the wires by themselves, as I do to link my signals, or use the Flex as a push rod to work the signal arms:



The advantage of the thin wires are that they can run through the small notch under Lego track. This allows you to transfer a drive from one side of the track to the other, as I used for my level crossing. Don't expect too much push from a Flex wire. Fine for working signals, but not points.

This isn't a cheap hobby though - you will soon find you need several of the longer wires and at £6.99 for a Flex pack, don't expect to wire up Clapham Junction signals unless you have deep pockets. The longest signal run I am planning is 800 mm. I am always short of the longest Flex lengths and the shortest lengths aren't short enough. As a suggestion, it would be good to see a greater range of lengths, or a 'wires only pack' from LEGO.

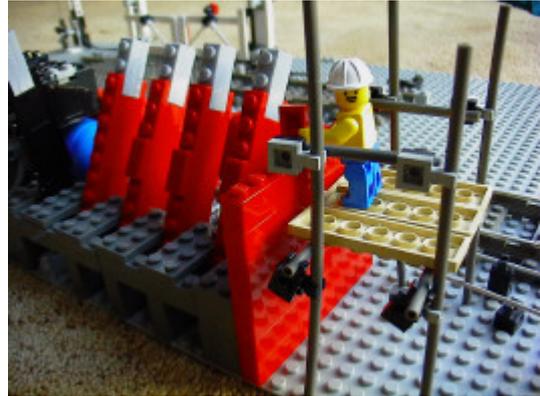
Connections and Cranks

As supplied in the pack, the standard connector for Flex is the ½ pin. If you find that the wires do not

quite add up to the right length, you could also use a 1x2 plate to adjust the length (see the wire nearest the track in the picture above). To change direction with cranks, I use a Technic 3x3 Lift-arm, and connect the Flex using Technic axle pins.

Other ideas

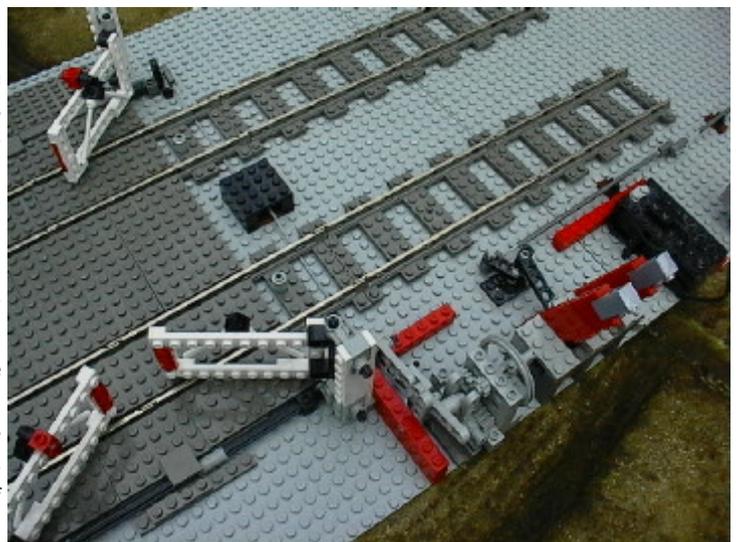
As I tend to use only the Flex wires, I have a lot of tubes left over. The builders are moving in shortly to complete my new signal box, so they will need some scaffolding:



Remove the arm from a small lever, and you will find that a Flex wire also just clips neatly into the base. This makes Flex good for fine handrails, for locomotives and ships and for overhead wires for trains and trams. Mark Bellis has also used Flex as connecting rods for his magnificent 9F.

On models such as 8856 - 'Whirlwind Rescue Helicopter', Flex is used to control the pitch of the rotors, using the towball style connectors. There must be many other applications of Flex for aircraft models - wonder if the new 'Wright flyer' is 'Flexed up'? Finally, how about a 'proper' suspension bridge?

I hope this article has given you a new angle on Flex - an underused LEGO item - so far....



Note: unofficial Flex parts for LDraw are available at:

<http://www.geocities.com/technicpuppy/parts/flxindex.html>

5 MINUTE MODELS

2. Picnic Table, by Simon Bennett

No reasonably realistic town or village would be without a pub and an easy way to add interest to such a model is to have minifigs outside enjoying a drink in the open air. Sure LEGO have done this by just putting a standard minifig seat straight onto a baseplate but your minifigs can enjoy a more realistic outside dining experience on this quick and easy picnic table.

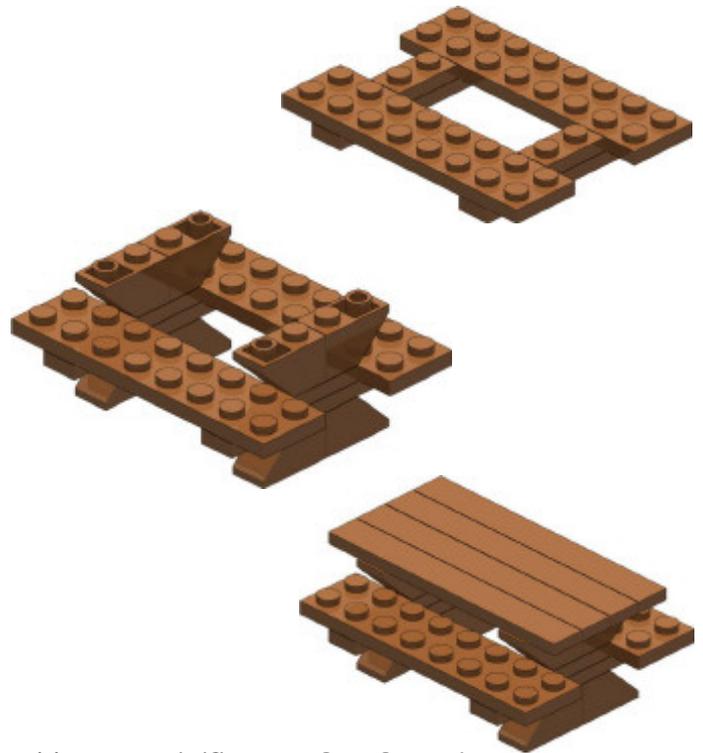
Parts:

45 Deg slope 1x2	4 off
45 deg inverted slope 1x2	4 off
1x2 plate	2 off
1x6 plate	2 off
2x8 plate	2 off
1x8 tile	4 off
can be 4 off 1x8 plates	

It looks good in brown and in tan but I am sure other colours could work.



Construction of the model is very simple:



Then add some minifigs, perfect for pubs, parks and even gardens.

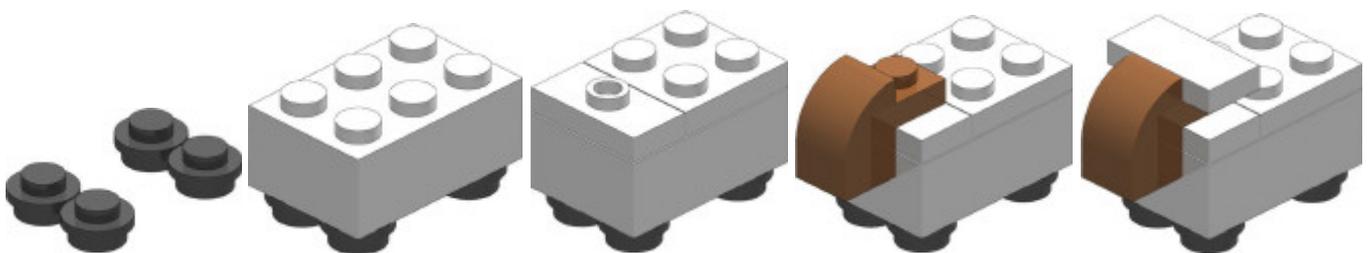
3. Sheep, by Mark Palmer

I cannot claim full credit for this model as it is based on a picture I found through Lugnet. I would gladly acknowledge the original creator if I knew who it was.

An easy way to populate scenery is to add some livestock this is a simple way to build sheep. The instructions are fairly obvious and given the parts you should be able to

build a good sized flock in 5 minutes! Colours are optional but there is always room for a black sheep or 2, brown sheep look OK, and black or tan faced sheep look good. Pink as featured at GWLTS is probably going too far!

Start with a 2x3 brick add 1x1 round plates (black or brown) for feet, add a 2x2 plate and a 1x2 jumper on top, put a 1x2 with Curved Top onto the jumper plate, and finish with a 1x2 tile for the ears!



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 (5MM) article.

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