OBSERVATIONS ON MODEL PAINTING & WEATHERING

A combined set of notes from the Editor, Alan Cooper, and Alan Burkinshaw for the weathering section. And as a genuine co-incidence, *after* I'd written this, George Dent wrote something very similar in Model Rail!

I have dabbled with military modelling and occasionally buy a copy of Military Modelling International magazine, where I perceive interesting differences in approach between that hobby and railway modelling.

As a leading example, articles regarding the build of a given model will give a reasonable description of the build itself, but there will be as many words given over to the painting and weathering. Some of it is quite extreme in a fascinating way, and although aspects of railway modelling have been catching up for a while, I think the military modellers are still ahead in their dedication to portraying realism.

Two other observations: I'd suggest that military modellers often go to great extremes to attain accuracy (no difference there?!) but the modelling magazines don't seem cover the prototype in as much detail as we see in the railway magazines. Furthermore, we railway modellers create large scenes to display our creations, where even the micro-size layouts are usually larger than the military dioramas; there is definitely a line to be crossed between size of project and level of detail applied. However - we can still learn techniques from any kind of modeller.

The following have been picked up from a number of articles regarding tank modelling, though I make no claim to have tried any – and as with anything, it's up to each of you to use what you think works. And if you have had successes, please let me know so I can share them here!

Undercoat

Use a flat black – or vary with dark browns – suggested to aid shadow areas.

Top coats

Apply light coats, but vary the colour very marginally with each coat to get varying tones on the model. Lighter shades can be misted directly over highlights and raised detail to 'lift them out' Shadow areas can have dark washes to emphasise the shadow.

Streaking and staining

Dark brown paint, heavily diluted, applied with downward brush strokes. Even using dirty old turps can be effective (Ed – this is one method I've tried – I found it effective).

Alternatively, to avoid brush strokes, apply some turps to the top of the model (or where required) and let it run. Then apply a very small amount of colour to the top and let it run down the turps. The turps will evaporate and leave subtle streaks. Please note, the base should be allowed to dry for 3 days before trying this, to ensure the turps doesn't overly affect it. Slightly vary the tones as you work around the model.

Rust, Mud, Dust, scratches, chips etc

Use a variety of rust-coloured pigments, applied wet-on-wet, working from dark to light.
Vallejo do a rust set of 4 jars, as well as sets for dust & dirt, mud & sand, soot & ashes and stone & cement.

MIG also do a range of pigment sets, AK make liquid pigments, whilst VMS is another commonly-appearing brand who do a 'Chip & Nick' paint

Use a chrome orange wash for new rust, darken as required for ageing the rust effect. Work from top to bottom, selectively, letting It run to the bottom of panels and other details as required. If it appears to be drying too bright, lighten with extra turps.

For a blistered paint rust effect try applying a little thin PVA glue and dusting with talc. Blow the excess off then apply the wash. Perhaps a powdered pastel can achieve the same effect?

A product called Ryza Rust by Citadel can be dry brushed on, with top colours stippled over.

A method I've seen a few times is salt and hairspray, but here's two slightly different takes. Paint the model/area required with suitably rust-coloured paints.

A) Then use a cheap houseplant spray bottle with some water and a drop of washing-up liquid, spray to lightly mist the air and waft the model through the mist to wet it. Then apply table salt, which will stick to the wet areas. Leave to dry. Then spray the top coat, and allow to dry before brushing off the salt to expose the rust-coloured areas. Experiment with how wet/salty you want it to be with just how much rust effect is needed, and I suspect some of the rust effects can be further enhanced with dry brushing or washes.
B) Use a small piece of sponge fixed to a stick, dab the sponge on some soap or soap crystals and apply to the model as required. This method is useful for small areas. Allow the soap to dry if applied damp. Apply the top coat and allow to dry, and the treated area can be washed afterwards. This method, if done lightly, can suggest light chips in the paint.

Here's some sample images of rust for inspiration! There's many, many more on the web.

For mud and dust (say, detritus in the bottom of empty wagons), try mixing a little Polyfilla or talc with the appropriate colour paints and stippling it on the model. A generally dusty affair could be achieved by painting and scattering talc, powdered pastels or fine sand – whatever you find seems suitable.

An example of subtle weathering, scratches, blotches, you name it.

Highlights

Pencil graphite shavings applied to exposed metals helps to give a smooth sheen.

A targeted pin-wash applied to the likes of panel lines, hinges, rivets etc with a very fine brush, applied to a glossed base coat (this helps it flow better). Use a dark paint let to 90% thinners/10% paint. Restraint is key!

Some modellers detail/weather using oil paints. The oil can leave an unwanted sheen, so it's suggested that the paint to be used is dispensed onto a piece of kitchen paper and left for a few minutes to absorb some of the oil.

Weathering Stock

One advantage of the lockdown has been an opportunity to catch up on some kit building. I had a number of kits that I had in store whilst concentrating over the last few years on completing my layout. When complete I gave them the weathering treatment to match with the rest of my stock. I also had a couple of RTR coaches to weather. So I thought I would share what I do, which works for me.

I have completed a W and E1r tank which by coincidence finished as bankers in Exeter.

As black engines I use Halfords gloss black before applying transfers. Following a recommendation from Bern I have used Railtec who produce bespoke smokebox plates and cab numbers for a reasonable price, also included is your choice of shedplate.

I then apply a spray of Games Workshop matt varnish. Then to the weathering, I try where possible to have a colour picture of what I am trying to achieve.

If doing tank engines you often find that the tanks and cab/bunker sides get cleaned and the rest does not. To achieve this I apply Pledge Klear polish to the sides which gives a gloss finish.

I make a mix of Humbrol Black Metalcote 27004 with Humbrol Leather 62. The ratio is about 90% black although you can vary that down to say 80% to give some variety. On the gloss sides I probably only do one pass with the spray just to take the edge off the gloss. I then spray all over with perhaps 5/6 passes along the top as that area gets more affected by soot. Also often on large passenger locos the cleaners cannot get right to the top. I attach photos of the engines in gloss and then having had the dulling down treatment.

I then give them a variety of effects using either paint or powders. In most cases I apply Humbrol black wash and, as with everything, do so in vertical strokes to replicate weather effects. I then use Boots cosmetic sponges to wipe most away. Don't buy cheap sponges they do not work I have tried and the ones from Boots are the only ones that do the job. I include a picture of what they look like.

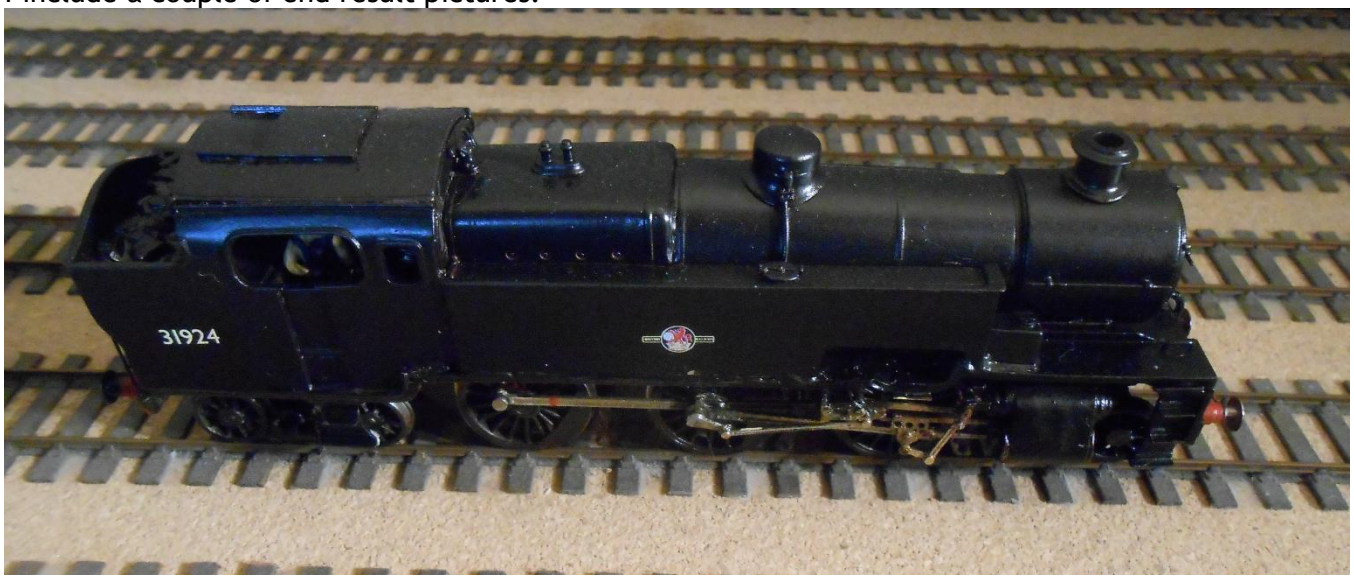
I use a variety of powders to give brake dust colouring which is applied to the brake blocks, also look at the ashpan which is often discoloured and rusty. For this I have a number of sources, Mig Modelling Pigment Track Rust, or Lifecolor Sleeper Grime are the main ones I use.

Often locos have a large flat area around the smokebox that gets dirty and greasy. I use the black wash with some black powder to recreate that effect but also add a bit of Mig Fresh Engine Oil to give that greasy look.

Then areas that have an oily finish again I use the fresh engine oil, for example Bullied Pacifics often had very oily driving wheels so I apply it to them.

Finally look at the picture to see where there are areas that have rust such as on riveted joints and use a powder, but sparingly. The above applies to steam engines, diesel are another matter, far more oil to deal with!

I include a couple of end result pictures.

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Turning now to coaching stock I include the process I use on BR Mk1's.

First of all I do the roofs using a similar mix as for the locos although probably more towards the 80% black. It seems that metal roofed coaches have a lighter colour than canvas covered that seem to be blacker. As an aside if I am doing DMUs I apply a darker area near the exhaust outlets. Don't forget to mask the coach sides you don't want them black.

I then do a mix that is about 70% leather and 30% black to use on the underframes. I spray from a close range so do not mask as a very slight over spray is ok. I spray the bogies and underframe details but do vary it, again use photographs. I then spray the ends to simulate where dust is thrown up from the adjoining coach, in fact I sometimes do that on the rear of tenders.

Then to the hand finishing. If I want a glossy finish I use the pledge again, probably two coats. Following that I apply the black wash. I attach some before and after pictures. I remove probably at least 90% of the wash but it remains in the nooks and crannies like the real thing. Use the wedges in a vertical movement to simulate rain running down the sides. On wooden panelled coaches it takes longer but you finish up with the weathering in the corners of the panels.

I then hand finish the underframe with the various powders to give some variance. Finally I use the fresh oil colour applied to the bogie springs and other areas where lubrication would have been applied.

That is it, often a bit of experimentation helps to see what works for you but I feel it gives a huge degree of added realism.