



Changes at the Parkside and Hale Railway

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It started with a load of rot!

Those who have visited Parkside will recall that it is a mainly ground level railway and a bit on the damp side. The track is GRS plastic sleepers and is fine, but the points have wooden sleepers and despite careful creosoting before installation the rot has set in after only three years. Replacement was essential and, as I did not want the same problem again, I gave some thought to an alternative track system. Happily, Cliff Barker had launched his stainless steel/all plastic sleepered track in gauge 3, including all the necessary turnout components and gauge-widened sleepers in weldable ABS. So what started as a simple replacement of the rotted turnouts has ended with a plan to replace all the trackwork.



As with so many plans, this one grew as time went by. If I am going to replace all the track, why not, I asked myself, take the opportunity to modify those tight radius curves that some of my visitors have trouble with and improve one or two other things at the same time? On a visit to Adrian Booth's attractive layout at Tenterden last year I was impressed with his use of sidings/passing loops on an otherwise single track railway like mine. These provide a place to steam up, pump water or liven up the fire while someone else continues to run around the main track. David Huddart and I ran our

two engines at the same time on the single track (aided greatly by my Atlantic having radio control) and when each of us had to stop to restore water level or the fire we simply ran into one of the sidings so as not to obstruct the track. This idea was added to the Parkside modifications. These changes are indicated on the plan.

Unfortunately increasing the radius of the curves at the western end and providing a passing loop along the back straight both involved excavating into the rising ground behind the railway for about 45 feet so that the pathway and small retaining wall could be moved about three feet back. Ah well, I needed the exercise! The retaining wall which consisted of wooden edging had also rotted, so that has been replaced by solid garden edging (Bradstone Weatherdale edging). Halfway through this job it occurred to me that I could leave part of the old track bed (thermalite blocks on a concrete base) to provide a dead end siding off the new passing loop. Another place to steam up a loco or park rolling stock.

All this has been a costly lesson and my advice to others about to embark on building a railway is

- 1) If choosing single track, design in passing loops
- 2) Don't avoid hard work by compromising on decent radius curves and
- 3) Don't use wooden sleepers on ground level trackwork, especially in damp areas.

The photos show work in progress and the ground work is now complete. Next comes the expensive bit – the track laying.



To spread the cost I am doing this in three phases, but this year will see all the planned improvements in place and, hopefully, I will be able to host some Get-To-Gethers.

