

Ballasting the track

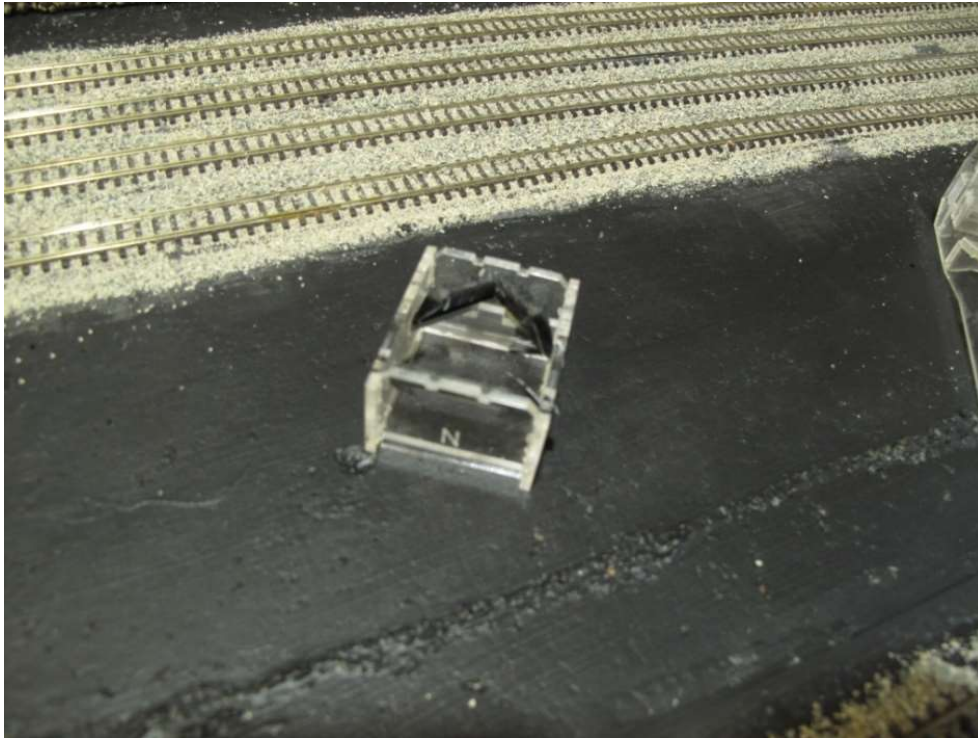
Before I began any of the scenery work I made sure that the track was fully electrically operational.



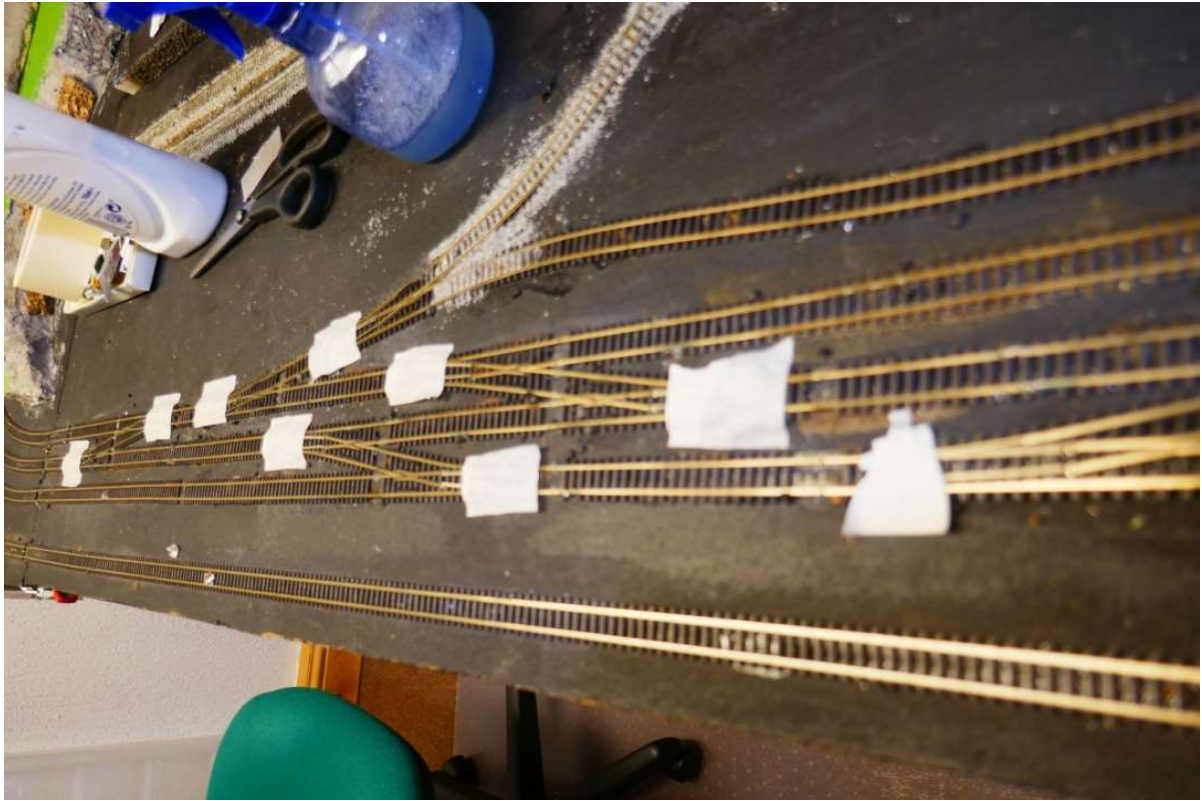
It is now the time to ballast the track. You can do it with a tea spoon and a steady hand but I prefer to use a ballasting tool. I bought a narrow one at first, but then added a second version as it seemed, in the demonstration to produce a better finish. Whilst this is true of straight track, widely

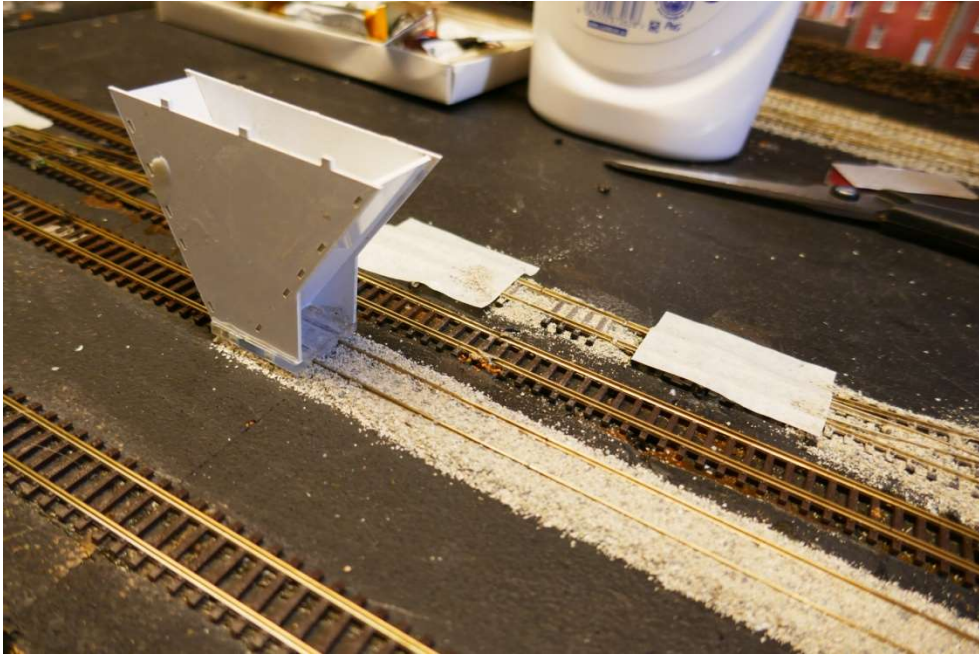
separated, the wider unit means that at points, you stop too soon and ballast spills just where you don't want it. Experience has shown that in curved situations and where there are points or crossovers, the narrower unit is much superior.

As the brush unit from the wider unit I use it to "tidy up" where necessary.



Before spreading the ballast, I cover over the moving points with masking tape.





Once the ballast is spread it is soaked with a spray of water containing a few drops of washing up liquid.

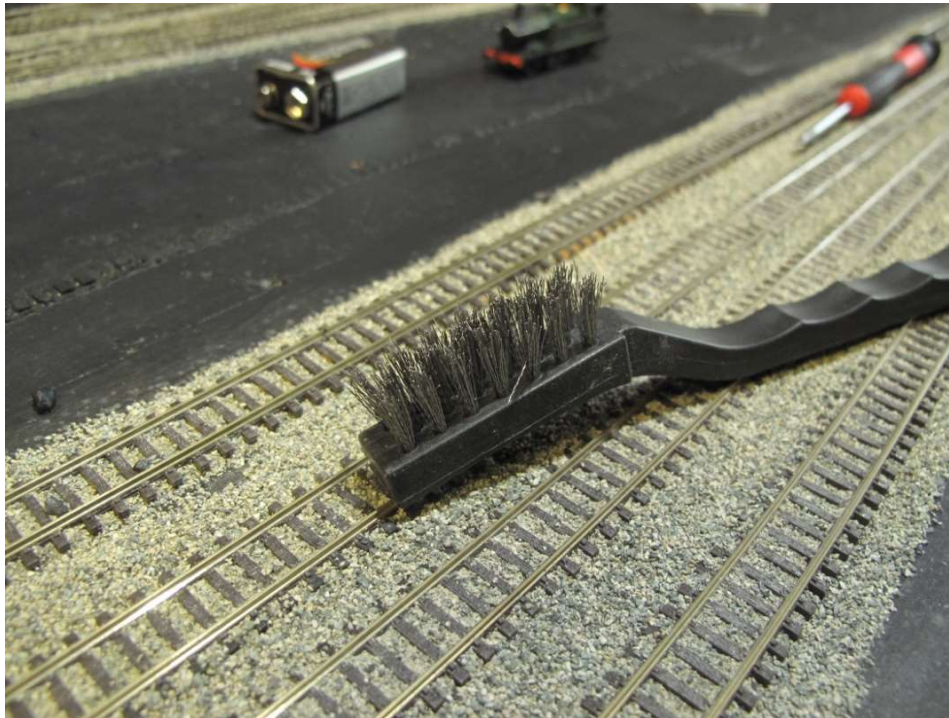


And then, using a pipette, a mixture of 50% PVA, 50% water and 3 drops of washing up liquid, I fill each of the troughs created by the rails.

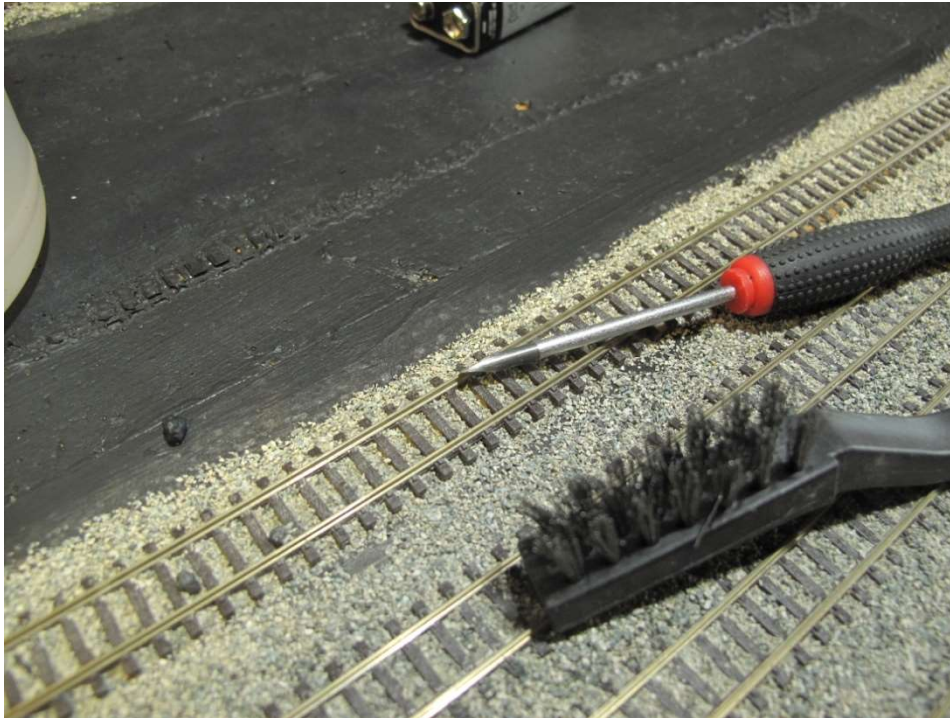


The mixture, because of the washing up liquid in the mixture, seeps across all the ballast as a result of capillary action between the granules. Overnight the track and the ballast dries and fixes everything in place.

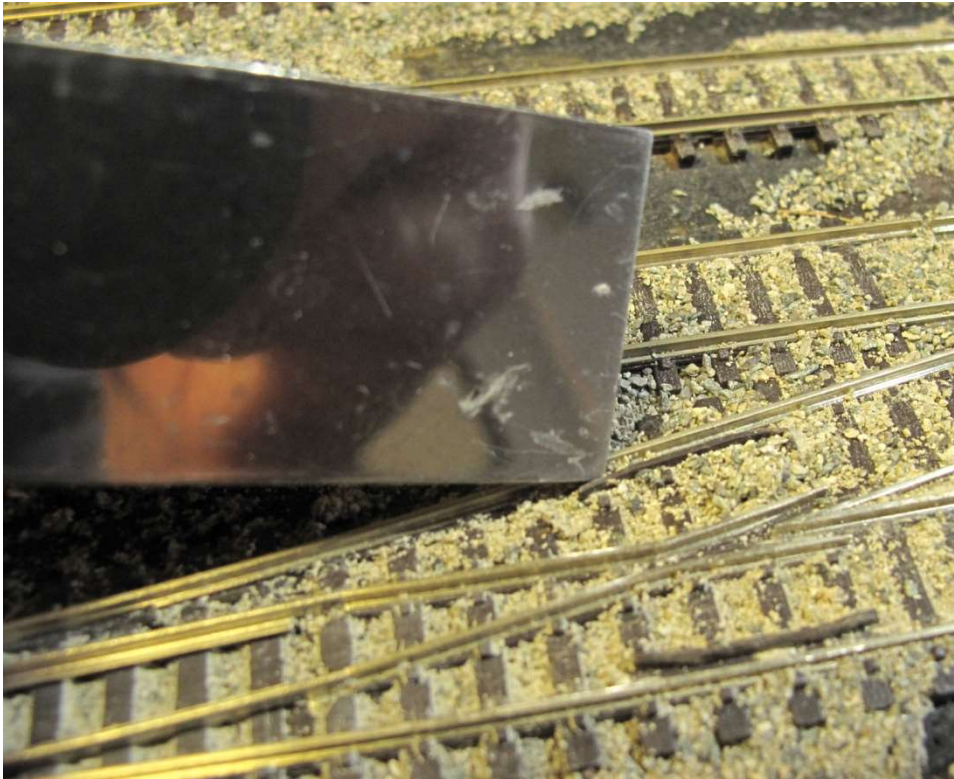
When hard dry, I use a small wire brush (tooth brush size from Wilkinsons) to make the initial removal of unwanted ballast.



This is followed by a screwdriver being run along the inner sides of the rails to remove stubborn pieces.



Finally I use a fine putty knife to clean out the narrow gap between the track and wheel guides on points.



The last task is to use a vacuum to remove all loose ballast, before using a track cleaner and then running a test loco. It is best to run a lightweight loco as it is the most likely to be derailed if there is still some stray grit.

