

FORTH HOTEL

by DON ROWLAND



Here is the finished model, though still needing chimney pots on the hotel part. The 'FORTH HOTEL' is in etched brass, produced in record time by Robert Kosmider of Steam and Things whilst the suitably discreet 'POST HORSES CARRIAGES' over the archway was done in the smallest possible size on the computer.

Yes, it's different, a change from shunting and freight trains for a while, a sort of intermission perhaps. And a change is as good as a rest, they say, which is how I felt at the beginning of 2008. So far as model railways were concerned, I wanted to do something different, a hobby sabbatical as it were. But what (that was the big question) should it be?

Now, as some of you may know, my old pals in the East of Scotland Group have got themselves involved in making a model of Burntisland as it was circa 1883. It began as a simple layout for the Scalefour Society's 1883 Challenge. It keeps on growing; I gather one member has even suggested they also model the Granton end of the train ferry service as well. No problem there, but I foresee the big tank of water between the two halves causing minor difficulties, to say nothing of the problem of creating scale waves. I leave it to them to

regale you with all the goodies that are planned, but I heard they were looking for someone to model the hotel which stood on the Burntisland quay beside the original station. 'Ah!', I thought, 'That would be a nice little change, totally different'. So, taking the metaphoric three steps forward and saluting, I volunteered and in no time at all was signed up for the job.

Nice, *Little Change*, I said: Well, more or less. Nice, it most definitely is. I have enjoyed the experience, every minute, although it hasn't always seemed like it at the time. And a *change* it most definitely has been too; I can't remember when I last modelled a building. But *little* it most certainly has not been. I have gone through blades for the scalpel and Stanley knife like no-one's business, I'm on the second can of solvent and it has positively eaten Plastikard, to the delight of Mr David White no doubt. Even the old drawing board is begging for mercy, having

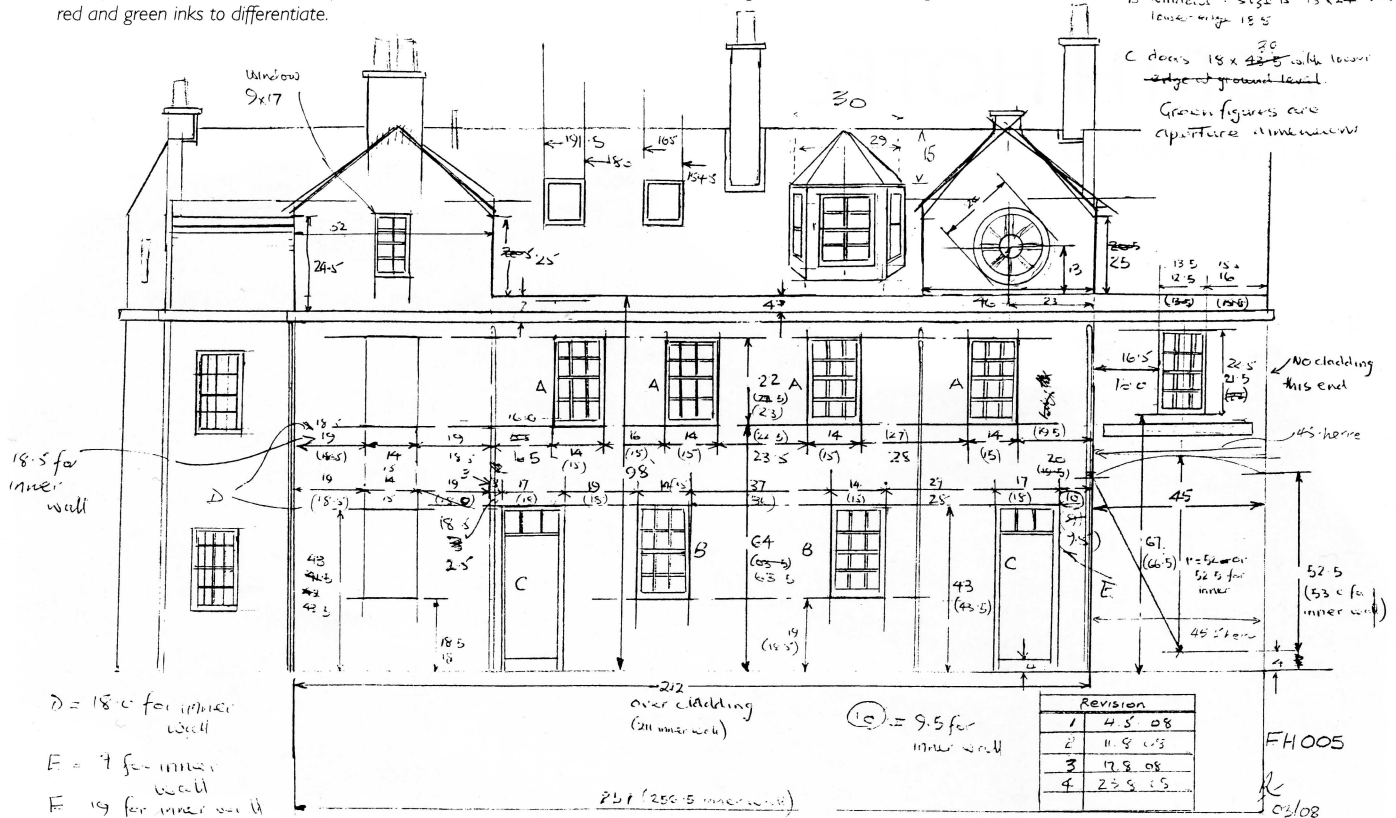
seen more action since February than it had for ages. As for the Central Cheshire, that will be suing for desertion. I shudder to think of the maintenance backlog once I get back to it.

The hotel stood on the quayside at Burntisland and, as I understand it, was originally the manse, but apparently it was not to the minister's liking and, before the railway arrived, the congregation bought him another one, away from the harbour, and he had moved. Bearing in mind that before the Forth and Tay bridges were built, the Edinburgh to Aberdeen traveller went by train from Edinburgh all the way to Granton harbour, thence ferry to Burntisland, train to Newport, another ferry crossing the Tay and finally a train to Aberdeen, the nascent rail service provided good business and the former manse was enlarged and converted into an hotel. Beside it, Downie's stables were built which not only provided posting horses and carriages but,

A. *Wormless* - make basic
aperture size 15×2.3 with
lower edge $6.3 \times$ from base

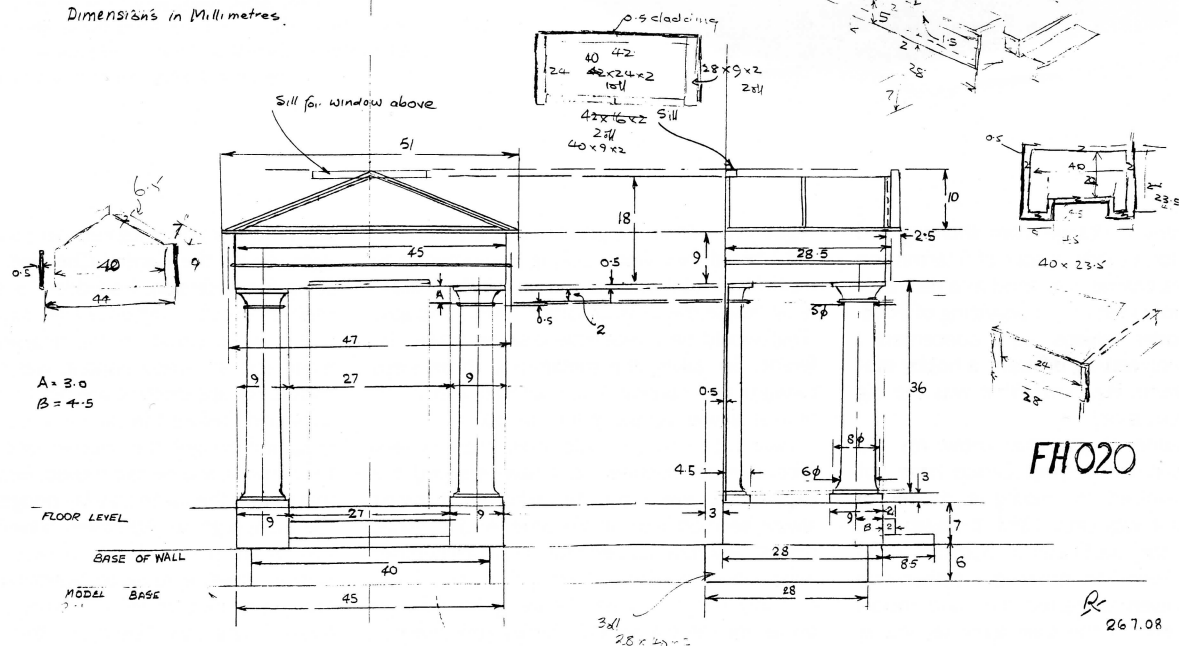
B. *Wormless* - size is 15×24 with
lower edge $18 \times$

C. *deers* 18×20 with lower
~~edge at ground level.~~
Green figures are
aperture dimensions



PORTICO

Dimensions in Millimetres



Forth Hotel – Portico FH020. The portico was quite different from anything else, so I used my discretion and left it to the last. Not only that, but it reminded me of one of the few things I remember from Latin lessons: 'I went in through the portico and into the place beyond. I forgot it was the atrium and fell into the pond.' So, back at the drawing board, I have included this one because it shows my working sketches for various details.

presumably, accommodation for servants, grooms, coachmen and lower orders in general as well.

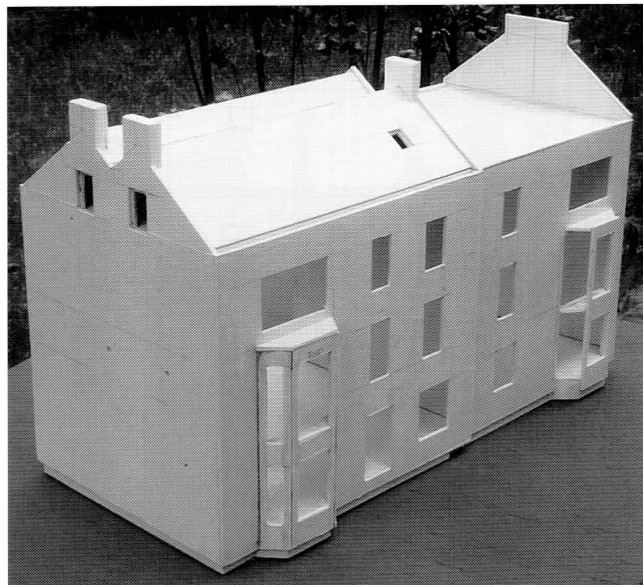
With the opening of the Forth Bridge, the hotel and the stables doubtless lost a lot of custom and the Great War of 1914-18 did not help either. In 1918 the hotel was bought by the North British Railway as their Control Centre for Fife, a role which continued until 1962 when its work was taken over by Edinburgh. After a period during which it gradually became more and more derelict, the old hotel was demolished and replaced by a block of flats. At the same time, I gather, Downie's stables were converted into flats as well. The task was to make a model of the hotel and stables as extant in 1883 or thereabouts.

In the paragraphs that follow I do not intend to describe the construction in detail. It was the usual measure, check, cut and stick, hundreds of times over; but the design of the basic carcase is perhaps a bit different. The hotel and stables are removed for transit and drop into the baseboard when the layout is on display, and so they have to be sturdy to cope with constant handling and transport. At the point where the two-storey stables join the three-storey hotel, there is an archway giving access to the rear of the stables. In modelling terms, this archway is a weak point, so hotel and stables have been built as two separate buildings which are bolted together by two 4BA bolts and nuts for exhibition.

For each building the carcase material is 2mm Plastikard, to which a 0.5mm overlay representing either walls or roof is added. The basis of each is a 6mm thick floor of box-type construction which gives great rigidity. The 'foundation' walls, which locate the buildings into holes in the baseboards, are fixed to this and then outside them there are the walls themselves. The walls sit on the baseboards and are strengthened with internal dividers and a ceiling, both of more 2mm material. To cap it all (sorry, no pun intended), the basic roof structures are also of 2mm material with their own bases. Fixed to the ceilings, they form a very rigid base structure which, one hopes, will withstand the rigours of both transport and exhibitions.

But we are running a bit ahead of ourselves here. In fact, it was some time before cutting of the first Plastikard. Before I could even decide how the model was to be built, let alone get measuring and cutting, I had to study the drawings, and therein, as someone once said, lies the rub. As provided, they consisted of a floor plan together with ceiling heights for each floor of the hotel, presumably measured by the North British when they bought the hotel. And that was it; not a single elevation anywhere to be seen. There were photographs as well, all taken from ground level and a sheet of the hotel's headed notepaper. This latter had as a header an artist's drawing of the hotel which, at first sight, seemed to be a godsend, but I soon realised it had so much artist's licence as to put it in

Once construction began, the first stage was to make the carcase for the hotel and here it is in virgin 2mm Plastikard. The roof for the hotel extension had not been added because at that stage I was unsure of the form it should take. And as you can see, I had been just so busy I hadn't got around to mowing the lawn.



the same league as the proverbial chocolate teapot, to wit marvellous to look at but in practice not fit for purpose. In the end, of the photos, there were four which proved to be a godsend. One was a Valentine's postcard circa 1900 and taken from a point some distance away, presumably from a jetty. Thanks to the cameras in use in those days, the detail is good when enlarged (in fact it even shows the NB loco coal wagons outside the front door of the hotel!), but it was a great help. The other three were taken by Richard Hollingworth in the last days of the hotel, one of the rear of the building from the road behind it and the others showing demolition in progress. The last two gave me highly valuable detail, as I shall describe later. There were other photographs too, all taken from ground level and mainly at oblique angles, but not one showing any roof detail. How one wished the Valentine's photographer had come by hot air balloon.

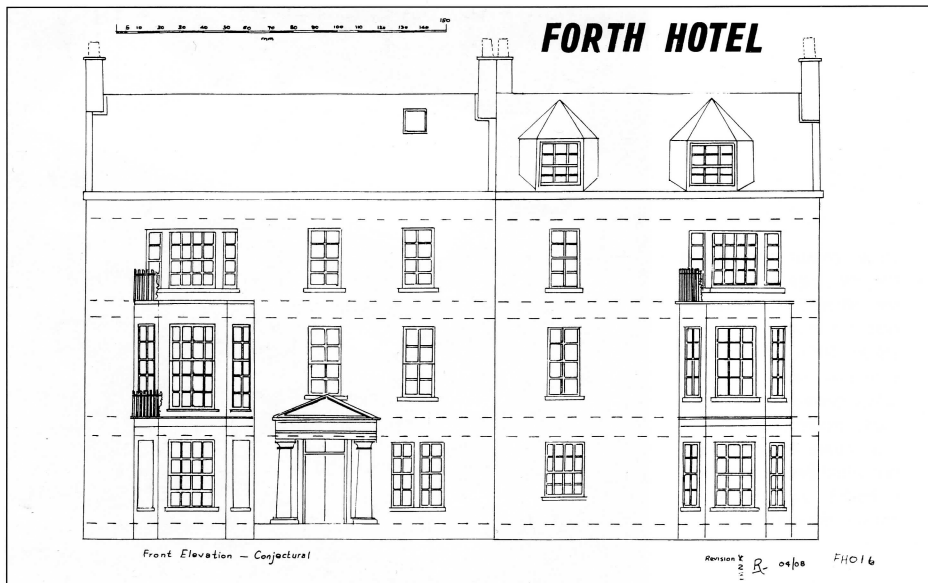
I decided that to make even a half-decent model, drawings were necessary, so out came the drawing board, instruments were unearthed and a nice new eraser was bought. In the end I have made twenty-five separate drawings and I reckon that about one third of the elapsed time has been spent on creating them. What has helped was the group's decision that there would be a backdrop behind the hotel and stables, so there was no need for rear elevations, but the crucial drawings were front elevations of the hotel and stables, along with end elevations. The floor plan, of course, gave me widths but height was the difficulty, one that has persisted throughout.

For the hotel, the NB's ceiling heights were a good start. Working on the basis of nice thick floorboards, good, solid joists (giving plenty of room for lots of ashes to deaden the sound) and substantial lath and plaster ceilings, I eventually

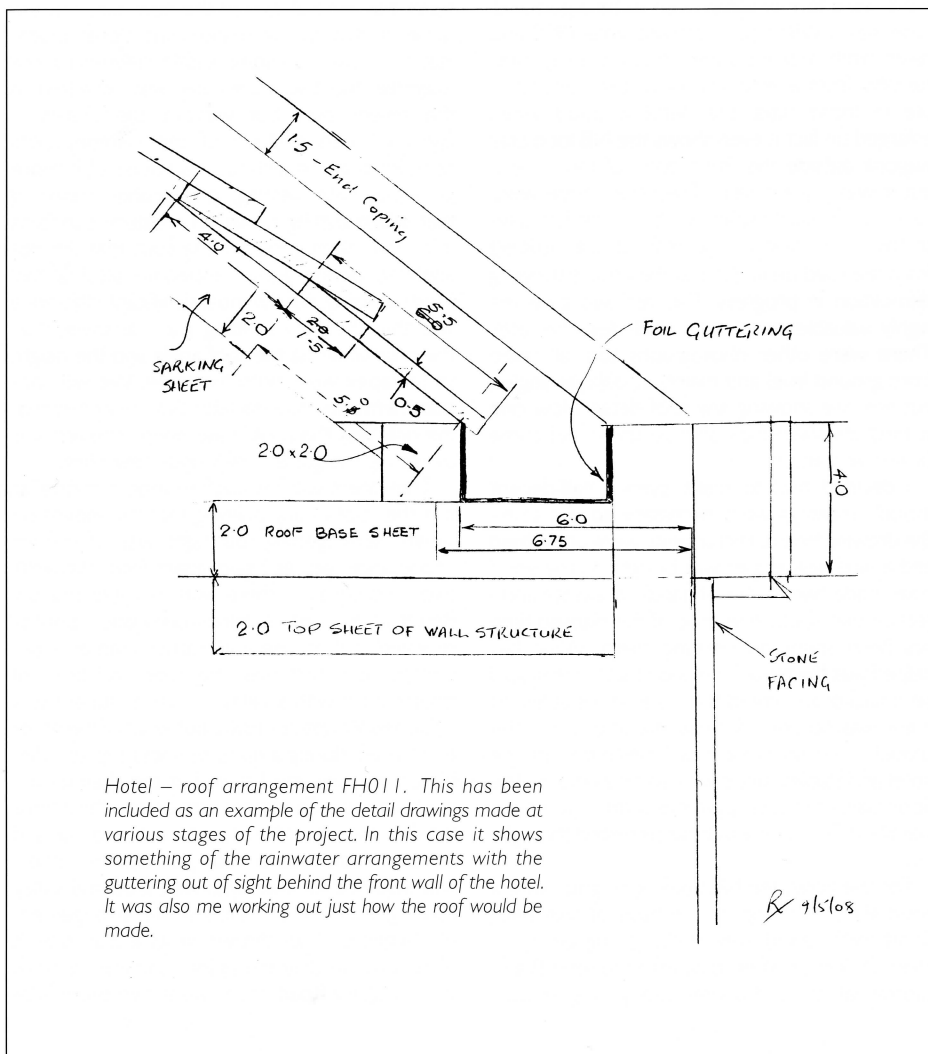
arrived at a front elevation up to ceiling level, which sort of tallied with my rough calculations.

When the manse was extended to form the hotel, the general style of the new part was the same as that of the manse, but closer examination showed up some subtle differences. For example, the two-storey bay was repeated in the newer part but without the first-floor balcony. Then a study of the chimney pots revealed that the architect had been a bit more generous with heating, presumably reasoning that whilst cutting down on creature comforts may have been good for the soul, that did not apply to paying guests, especially after a bad Forth crossing. But the most significant difference was that the new building was narrower than the original whilst the roof angle and the height to the apex were both the same. We will consider rainwater disposal later; but I reasoned that the only way this could have been achieved was by setting the gutters back under the tiling.

Then there was the roof. Bearing in mind that it is the roof of any building that the exhibition viewer sees, getting this right was of utmost importance, yet, as I said, apart from Richard's two photographs there was no information. Bereft of its roof, Richard's demolition photos revealed that at one end, rather than a single-pitched roof, that over the hotel had been of double pitch with a valley between, rather like a squashed W upside-down. But what of the other end? Then, during a quick business trip to Edinburgh, my wife and I stayed at the Premier Inn at Haymarket. Our room was on the third floor looking over to Morrison Street and, lo and behold, there was a roof just like the one I had assumed for the hotel with a central valley running the full length and a similar arrangement of chimneys. And, thrown in as a bonus as it were, on a building across the road from the bus stop in Dalry Road, there were two super little



Forth Hotel, Front Elevation. This was the first drawing from which everything else stemmed. Understandably, it should be FH001 rather than FH016. By the time the original was considered to be acceptable, it had so many amendments and alterations that I traced it – with bow pen on linen no less, how's that for a vintage approach? – and even unearthed some Letraset (no wonder spell-checker jibbed at that one) for the title. Look carefully and you can see evidence of some revisions.



Hotel – roof arrangement FH011. This has been included as an example of the detail drawings made at various stages of the project. In this case it shows something of the rainwater arrangements with the guttering out of sight behind the front wall of the hotel. It was also me working out just how the roof would be made.

dormer windows just like those needed for the hotel roof as well. Back to the drawing board, literally. Eventually front elevations for the hotel and stables together with end elevations, all to 4mm scale, were produced, photocopied and sent to the customer for approval. The general agreement was that they looked right, so it was time to start construction.

The next stage was to make dimensioned drawings of the base plus front and end walls, followed by much cutting and sticking of Plastikard. Around about this time I decided to make the roof as a separate section glued to the ceiling for strength (more drawings) and by 20th May the carcass of the hotel was nearly complete. It was time to apply stone cladding and roof tiling. Ah, yes! the stonework. And therein lies another tale.

Burntisland stone is, I am assured, dark-greyish in colour anyway, and it seems that is what was used for the hotel. That, plus more than a 100 years of locomotive and steamboat smoke, along with Firth of Forth weather, meant that picking out details of the stonework from photographs was very difficult indeed, which is a polite way of saying almost impossible. All I could be sure of was that above the first floor, smaller stones were used, so I made a management decision: I would do it my way. What was obvious was, first, that the stones for the quoins, lintels and window surrounds were of different sizes from those used elsewhere and, second, that there were no ready-embossed stonework sheets that were suitable, so every single bit had to be hand-scribed. On top of that, I soon found it was easier to cut and fit quoins and suchlike first and butt other pieces up to them.

After all the problems at the beginning, the roof was much easier. Traditional Scots roofing involves slates and zinc roll flashing on the apices, so that is what the model has. It also uses mortar fillets, presumably lime mortar which is waterproof, around chimneys and gables and, since no matter how closely I looked, no evidence of lead flashing could be seen, fillets of model filler were used.

At this point I should say something about the rainwater goods, the guttering and the down pipes, in Scots parlance, the rhones. On the hotel there aren't any. On the better class of Victorian buildings, the rain water drained into wide gutters behind the walls, presumably lead lined, discharging into internal down pipes, all of which makes for a very neat external appearance. The arrangements for the stables are similar except that the down pipes here are external.

The most troublesome items on the roof were the small dormers, two on the hotel roof and one on the stables. In the end, I found the simplest way to make them was to build up a solid block of 2mm thick Plastikard sheets for the roof and file it to shape, adding the windows, three per dormer, and side walls to the main roof, and then finishing by fitting the dormer



roof in place over them. In fact, there are three dormers on the stables block, two larger ones ending with stone gables plus a smaller one similar to those on the hotel. This smaller one seems to have been an afterthought as it is placed about twelve inches from one of the larger ones. With a surprising degree of foresight, I realised there was no way I could paint the roofing between the two or their adjacent side walls, so the little fellow was built as a unit and painted before putting it in position.

The other interesting bit of construction was the portico on the hotel with its grandiose roof and supporting columns. The latter were obviously a turning job involving the purchase, first of all, of some 9mm diameter plastic knitting needles. Several attempts and much plastic swarf later, I had three suitable columns, two for the front and one, cut longitudinally, for the half-section columns supporting the rear. Then, for once in my life, Sod's Law ceased to apply; literally, just as I was parting the last one off, the motor on my lathe failed, totally and completely! It is an AC Delco model, fifty years old at least and the centrifugal switch had given up. Luckily, in the town we have a small firm, Shropshire Rewinds, and the man there got it going again so, in the unlikely event that I decide to make new columns, there is nothing stopping me now.

The windows are the only other item worthy of comment. Apart from the rose window in one of the gables over the stables and the fixed lights above the doors, every single one was an opening sash, all 42 of them. And, no, before you ask, they do not open on the model! I used 1.2mm thick Plastiglaze for the glazing, cutting a piece to fit each aperture, then cutting it into two with the top part 1mm longer than the bottom one. The smaller, lower part was cemented in place, then two 1mm×0.5mm pieces of Microstrip were added to the back edges of the upper piece and that was cemented in place. In this way it juttied out 0.5mm over the lower half to give the impression of an opening sash window. Framing and astragals were added in 1×0.5 and 0.5×0.5 Microstrip to finish the job.

Hotel and stables, still in virgin Plastikard but now complete except for chimney pots and painting. The rounded corner on the stables was achieved by use of some 2mm Plastikard, a former and use of the kitchen oven. I think it makes a very attractive and rather unusual feature. The use of darker coloured Plastikard for quoins and lintels was to differentiate between different stone sizes. There was also a vague idea that they would show up as a darker colour, but it did not work out that way.

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