Building A Simple Baseboard Kit

Railway modelling embraces numerous skills from electric wiring to plastic kit building and from cutting card to carpentry. We can't all be good at everything and one of the jobs which deters some people is baseboard building. Happily there are people who'll do the difficult part for you...

At this time of the year there are many would-be modellers who are about to make a start in the hobby. One of the first things they'll need is a sound baseboard on which to start building their layout. Sadly, with less teaching of pure carpentry in schools and a much reduced need for today's home-owners to do any woodwork of their own, the need for basic carpentry skills to build a baseboard can be a deterrent.

Fortunately, the model railway hobby is well blessed with people who'll put their skills to work to solve the areas which others find difficult. In the October *Model Rail* we reviewed ready-made baseboard systems by Railbits and Yorkshire Woodcraft who offer two very different solutions to the problem of building portable baseboards to individual specifications. Now, we are able to suggest a third option which is particularly suited to those who want a single-piece baseboard for a Hornby layout.

Aimed at starters using a typical Hornby trainset, the standard HM baseboard kit provides a 6ft by 4ft board which folds flat for storage. It is intended to accommodate Hornby's trackmat but could be used for any track layout which can be fitted on that board size. Other modular baseboards are available from HM at 8 Front Road Woodchurch, Ashford, Kent TN26 3QE (see advertisement pages) by special request.

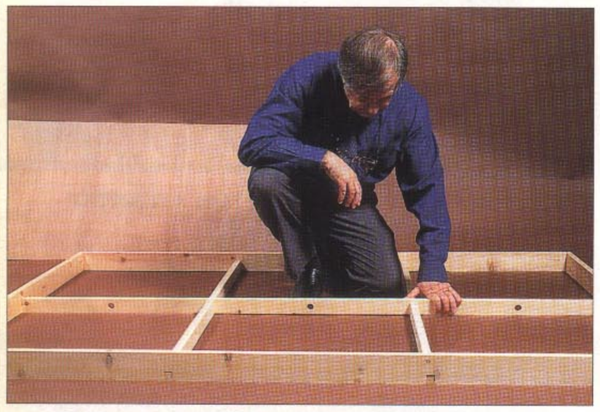
The kit provides for a lightweight 6ft by 4ft top with folding legs and comes complete with all fittings including adjustable feet and hinges. It requires rather less skill to assemble than the average piece of 'knock-together' self-assembly flat-packed furniture and uses good quality traditional woodworking joints throughout. Indeed, it's the first 'flat pack' in which I've seen a mortice and tenon joint!

Though no instructions were provided with our kit, the parts fit like a jig-saw and there's very little to get 'wrong'. The step-by-step illustrations below should remove any doubts you might have about how the parts should be assembled. MR

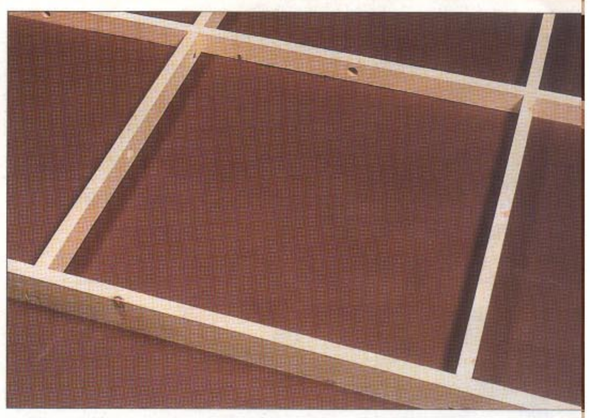
Right: The underside of the board showing the cross-bracing and the arrangement of the folding legs and braces.

Far right: The completed HM baseboard with a Hornby trackmat glued in place. To remove the creases the track mat could be carefully ironed - with a cool iron - on the unprinted side.

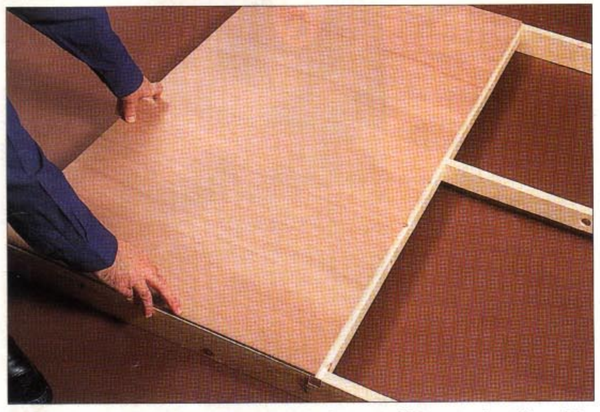
Here's How You Can Do It...



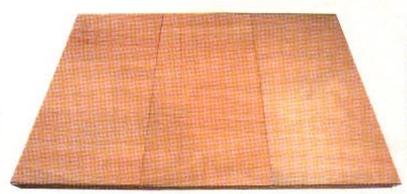
1 Begin by identifying the parts. There are three 6ft timbers and four 4ft pieces. These all have cross-halving joints cut in them. The 3in deep pieces form the front, back and sides of the frame while the 2in pieces are the inter-locking cross-braces.



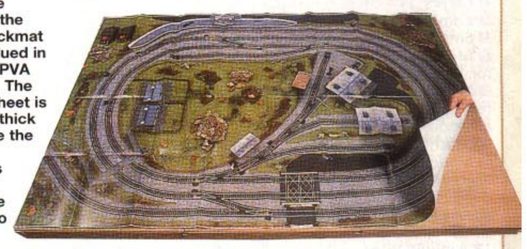
2 Lay out the parts on a flat surface and it's easy to see how they fit together, all the cut-outs interlocking. At this point the joints can be opened, PVA wood glue applied and fitted back together again before being fixed with the pins supplied.



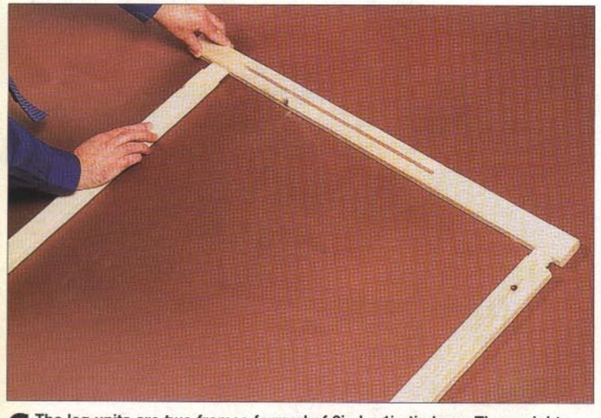
3 Check the frame is square and test fit the top, which comprises three 4ft by 2ft plywood sheets. Align the first sheet carefully with the frame edge, apply glue to the frame and pin the sheet in place carefully.



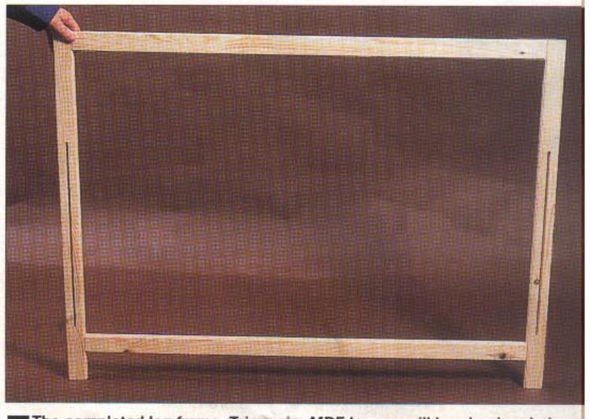
4 The first sheet should overlap the first crossbrace by a ¼in or so. Butt the second plywood sheet up to it, align it carefully and glue as before. The sheet is then pinned in place. Repeat with the third sheet.



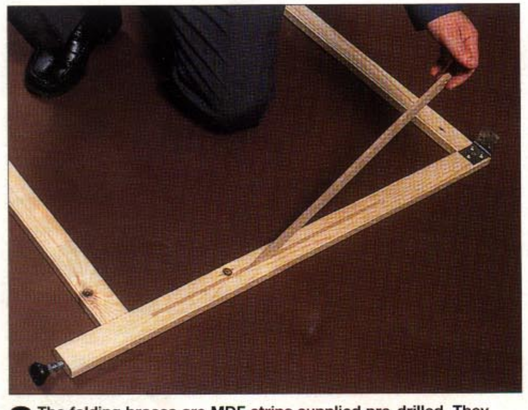
5 If you're adding the Hornby trackmat it can be glued in place with PVA wood glue. The standard sheet is printed on thick paper while the Hogwarts trackmat is polythene and may be less easy to glue.



6 The leg units are two frames formed of 2in by 1in timbers. The uprights are identified by their long slots, while the top and bottom rails are distinguished by different sized tenons. Just glue and press firmly 'home'.



7 The completed leg frame. Triangular MDF braces will be glued and pinned to the lower end of the legs. Screw-in adjustable feet are provided together with strap hinges to be fitted to the top end of the legs.



8 The folding braces are MDF strips supplied pre-drilled. They locate in the slot and are retained by knocking in a dowel pin. The single countersunk flap of the hinge is screwed to the top of the leg.

9 The top end of the brace fits onto a readymade dowel block. Check the position and glue and screw the block in place. The remaining hinge flap is countersunk on both sides to allow it to be fixed to the board frame from the 'back.'

10 The finished leg arrangement will allow both leg units to fold up inside the baseboard frame for flat storage. The leg braces drop back into the slots and the whole unit, though large, is not unduly heavy.