

'Alchemy'

Creating a Topaz from a Ruby

As Christmas 2013 approached, my wife Lesley casually mentioned that she would like to have a go at assembling a kit loco. She has always enjoyed doing puzzles and was familiar with the loco kits we sell through Argyle. I thought about the available kits and asked her for her preference. Her reply was immediate and certain. "... a blue one of course!"

I did have a Ruby kit that had been robbed of parts but was mainly intact, but it was black, not blue. A phone call to my friend Larry saw the necessary body panels (cab and side tanks) in his workshop for a respray. 'What sort of blue do you want?' he asked. 'Well, a sort of girlie blue I suppose', was my reply.

As Christmas approached, two suitably wrapped parcels appeared under the tree. The smaller one had her favourite perfume in it and the other, much larger and heavier parcel was wrapped with brown paper and tied with a large blue bow and rattled when she shook it.

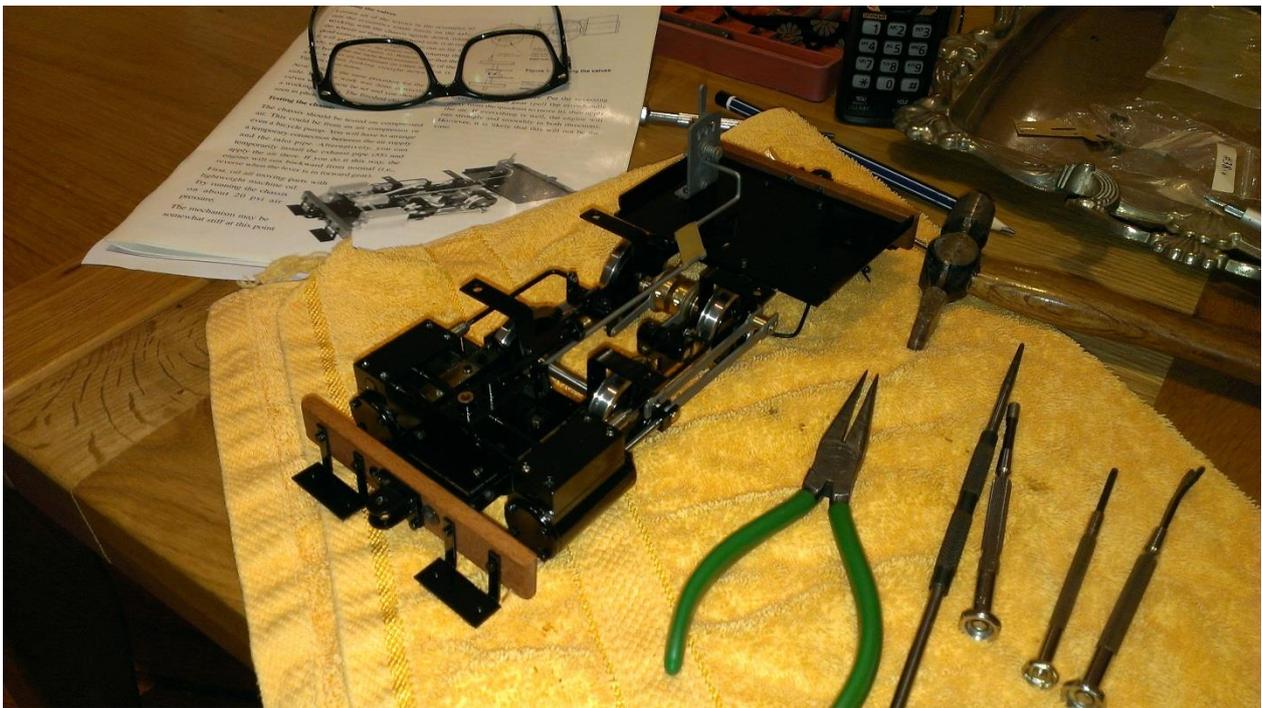
Initial progress was good. The frame and wheels went together well followed by the cylinders and the motion work but then business and other matters got in the way and the project was put aside.

For several months the assembled chassis with the adjacent box of parts and tools were neatly placed at the end of the kitchen bench awaiting their ascent on the 'Things to Do' list. At this point I will



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definitely NOT mention that should one of my projects remain on the kitchen bench for more than a day, its presence would have been pointed out with the inference that it should be removed to a more appropriate place.



Anyway, come May when things became a little less busy, work resumed on the kit. In reality all that was needed was for the valves to be timed and set, the boiler installed and the body work fitted. It was difficult for me to resist the urge to 'help' but she proved very capable of letting me know when she had received sufficient 'advice'. I can remember being asked 'What's a M2-4 Panhead Screw look like?' and 'What the heck is a Crosshead?' From a novice builder's perspective, I have a couple of suggestions that Mr Accucraft may like to include in the next revision of the assembly instructions.

The day arrived for its first steaming and to my surprise (not hers) it ran perfectly. The valve timing was spot on and there were no steam leaks; a feat I've never been able to achieve on my own projects. The loco has since been named TOPAZ. Ruby is OK for a red loco but a blue one should definitely be called Topaz. It also has a brass number '2' on the cab side because it's her second loco, the first being a wedding present from me. It also is blue.

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The next kit build is now being talked about. It might be a Roundhouse 'Fowler' (blue of course) or an Aster 'Thunderbolt' (A blue Thunderbolt? – we might need to talk about that!)

Michael Ragg



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