

Timber!

Henry, a Backwoods type locomotive kit from Regner

Reading the latest (2017!) catalogue from Regner, and the Easyline range of locomotives was reduced to just 3 – Vincent, Chaloner & Lumber Jack (finished model & kit), together with significant price increases. On 01st Feb 2019, to coincide with the International Toy Fair Nürnberg, Regner announced the release of Henry, a kit, as the newest addition to their Easyline range. This was picked up by official Regner authorised agents worldwide, and we patiently waited for stock to become available for sale.

At the Steam in Beds 2019 show I briefly talked with Graham & Janet Austin, Garden Railways Ltd. (the authorised Regner agent in the UK), about the expected date of availability for the Henry kit, noting that there was video online showing one running in the USA which was reviewed for the Steam in the Garden magazine by Shawn Viggiano. They had no further information at that time.

Internet surfing pays off

Just prior to Christmas I was surfing the internet to see if I could be tempted to buy something for myself when I discovered that Regner had been somewhat surprised into the early release of their new website, which includes a blog element. A blog posting explained that the 1st batch of 35 Henry kits had been sold out & were being delivered. Another new element of this website is an Online Shop, and I found it was much easier to use than their previous order form, going through the process of ordering a Henry kit right up to the Complete Order point, where I stopped. On revisiting the website the next day there was a new blog entry explaining that there was one Henry kit available from the 1st batch. My browser had kept all the data from my order attempt the day before, so I pressed Complete Order, and received an automated email reply. Later that blog entry changed to say the kit was no longer available, and the following day I received an email confirming my Henry kit was ready for shipping, offering payment by bank transfer or PayPal. Initially the PayPal option looked slightly cheaper, but on trying it I found that PayPal UK sneak in a foreign currency surcharge right at the end of their process, so went with the bank transfer, which was processed the same day.

This was just before Christmas, so I was very pleasantly surprised when a nice lady courier from DHL walked down in the snow to our side street to deliver my package. Inside was the Henry kit, together with some nice extras – a water filler bottle, bottle of steam oil, and two promotional items, a Regner branded pen with LED torch & a standing bottle opener whose cap is a beer bottle stopper. The kit comes in a cardboard box with a Henry label on the outside (the lid made a nice tray during the build process), with the various components either in numbered zip lock bags (numbers referring to diagrams in the instructions) or wrapped up in tissue paper. The included illustrated A4 size instructions are in German only. I did consider going through the somewhat laborious task of typing text into an online translator first, but with other Regner locomotives in my collection, I decided to proceed just using the photo diagrams & tabled content listings initially.

The metal chassis frames are already assembled so it was off to fit axles, wheels, gearing, etc. first. Here was where I hit two problems. The kit uses 19 x M3 socket head grub screws to secure the wheels, gears, cranks, etc. When I screwed a grub screw into the first crank it was very tight. Removed it and screwed it all the way into the second crank, but it jammed solid part way into the third crank. Not having an M3 tap I found a suitable brass M3 screw in my parts box, which I worked in & out to clean up those crank threads, and removed the jammed grub screw with pliers (fortunately there are a couple of spare grub screws included). The flywheel had a similar tight thread problem, but I had to use the only M3 hex head bolt in the kit as my screw above was too long here.

Outstanding Customer Service

The second problem was that the 50 tooth gear (to be mounted on the drive axle) was missing. Given it was now the festive season, I went ahead to check all the other components were included, and at least I could run in the engine before contacting Regner in the New Year. I sent an email to Regner on 02 Jan explaining the 50 tooth gear was missing, and received an automated reply that emails would be dealt with from 03 Jan after their festive break. Again I was very pleasantly surprised when the gear was delivered on 04 Jan with a 02 Jan postmark. Vielen Danke Regner!

The chassis is the same 0-4-0 coupled multi gauge chassis as previously used on Konrad, Willi, Wilma, etc. with a vertical boiler. The baseplate is laser cut plywood, with a nice feature of etched knots included, some with corresponding holes. I decided to paint the underneath of the baseplate black to blend in with the black metal chassis, and stained & varnished the top. Initially I had not fitted the thick laser cut wooden buffer beams whilst I decided whether to paint or stain them. In the end I did both, painting the back of the buffer beams black, and staining & varnishing the front & sides – this meant that the laser etched Regner Dampftechnik logo is still visible on their front.

The vertical boiler is a variation of that used on the Willi & Chaloner, with a side entry flue for the gas poker burner, going into 3 vertical flue tubes, and comes with a water sight glass, steam regulator, pressure gauge, two extra bushings with blanking plugs, and a safety valve. Curiously you have to assemble the safety valve yourself. The generic boiler certificate supplied states a working pressure of 3 Bar with safety valve setting of 3.5 Bar, but I could not get the safety valve to set above 2.9 Bar & still function correctly. Regner use PTFE tape primarily for their seals (some is included in the kit wrapped around a piece of cardboard), but I managed to find two small 'O' rings to seal the sight glass tube glands top & bottom instead.

The straight gas pipe needs bending to shape, which using the supplied photos is in a question mark shape. Nice to see that an adjustable primary air collar is now included with the poker burner. The steam pipe connecting the regulator, lubricator & cylinder block comes pre-bent. However the pipe section between the lubricator joint & the cylinder block is straight, which causes the lubricator to stick out quite a bit sideways. I've bent this pipe to wrap around the boiler barrel, but if it was a bit longer you could place the lubricator more inboard, and down to the baseplate level.

No condenser/oil separator

The published photos of Henry show no exhaust pipe from the cylinder block, so it was good to find a pre-shaped exhaust pipe included with the kit. This routes through a cut-out on the top of the boiler barrel, goes inside the boiler cap and there is a short side slotted chuffer type fitting to fit on its end. Being an oscillator it has quite a wet & oily exhaust. After some experimenting I found the best position for that slotted end fitting where most of the oily exhaust flows down the chimney cap onto the boiler top, which has a raised rim, where it gets boiled off. You still get an occasional drop of oily condensate down the central vertical flue tube, even more so at the beginning of a run.

The main body & roof are constructed from wood, much of it laser cut plywood. The front & rear side housings went together well (a zip lock bag of wood glue is included), but I did struggle trying to glue the hardwood longitudinal cross member to the uprights – some form of pinning could help here. The bodywork is designed to just be a friction fit down onto the baseplate (some of the housing external uprights extend below the baseplate), but as the roof is also removable I think it would be preferable to secure the bodywork to the base plate for ease of handling or getting knocked by lineside vegetation.

Included in the kit are laser cut stencils to allow you to dab Henry & Regner Lumber Werk LTD onto the bodywork. As the letters have not been removed from the stencil I made up a simple Henry nameplate using the letters & a piece of scrap wood.

On her first run on blocks there were a couple of steam leaks – a blanking plug & union nut needed nipping up. However there was quite a steam leak from the lubricator's adjustable spindle. I had followed the Regner instructions to use a string of PTFE tape here, but then remembered I had had a similar problem on my Vincent so fitted an 'O' ring instead.

I managed to get her finished in time for an outdoor running day just after New Year. Although I was using mixed gas (OAT 3°C with a chilling wind) it did highlight a problem when using a wooden baseplate & bodywork – there is little (if none) heat transfer to the gas tank. Eventually the burner could not produce more than 1 Bar steam pressure and as she is still running in I stopped the run early.

Boiler Capacity?

The kit instructions include some operating instructions at the end. With regard to the boiler & water, those instructions state not to fill the boiler to more than 70% capacity to prevent water being carried over to the cylinder (priming). The top of the sight glass tube is quite a bit down the boiler side. In the Online Shop entry the boiler capacity is quoted as approx. 115 mls, but like the Max boiler & its quoted capacity I've found this rather pessimistic. I've measured full capacity to the safety valve bushing as 235 mls. Using butane gas indoors & mixed gas outdoors, plus a replacement Ronson gas tank filler valve (these do not protrude down as much inside the gas tank compared to the Regner supplied filler valve) I've found the gas outlasts the water, so have been trialling removing 50 mls from a full boiler & stopping the run as the level approaches the bottom of the sight glass tube (which still leaves water around the burner flue). Regner introduced a new style water filler valve

(originally for their Rocket) which is available as an option, fitting on the top of the sight glass, allowing a longer run time.

Summary

The instructions are in German text, although both the UK & USA agents are providing translations. Some of the components are pre-assembled & most of the required tools are included, just requiring spanners for the M5 threaded nuts & union nuts. No drilling or soldering is required, and the pipework can be bent to shape by hand. The wooden parts are easily hand painted/stained/varnished. The proven coupled 0-4-0 multi gauge chassis with a 6 to 1 speed reduction through the gearing allows for some very slow running. The LGB compatible coupling can be adapted for use with most other coupling options.

The scale is 1:22.5 (modelling Metre Gauge on 45mm track) but fits in well with 16mm scale, although loading gauge needs checking with regards to actual height (chimney top is 180mm above rail head).

The price is attractive compared to the other 3 Easyline locomotives, and being a kit allows easy adaption to other locomotive types (e.g. a fully enclosed tram).

An optional accessory kit will be available shortly, including saw, axe, working vice, storm lantern, oil can, wood logs & wire cable with hook, etc. Part Number 25466 - 34.90€