



This article is provided by FMES for your interest thanks to the kindness of the original publishers. FMES makes no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied about the completeness, accuracy or reliability with respect to this document and any sentiments expressed are not necessarily supported by FMES. Any reliance you place on this document is therefore strictly at your own risk

Wheelhouse Interior

This document was written by Paul Naylor and is published here for FMES online viewing, and was written during 2025.

Sundowner – 15

I have now made and fitted all of the 'planks' in the lower half under the windows in the wheelhouse. These were cut and fitted one by one, with a little persuasion when they had to curve around the front panels. The next bit on the wheelhouse is the windows, which I will use the 2mm thick Perspex I have. It is a little thick, but you cannot really see this in situ. The windows in the straight bit could just be glued in as I have made rebates in the frames for them, but I may glue retaining strips inside to tidy up the edges a bit when viewed from the inside. The windows in the curved bit are all separately framed (in straight frames which opened on the real thing – not here!) and I plan to make these individually for each window by milling 2mm slots in a piece of hardwood and gluing these to the edge of each piece of Perspex. I should then be able to sand down the frames a little to make them fit snugly in the hole where they can be glued in. I will need quite a lot of rebated wood for this (it is about 5mm square with a 2mm wide 2mm deep slot in one side) and I resorted to the milling machine again to make some. The photo shows the set up for this, and after the slot is milled, the strip can be cut from the main stock, the edge sanded smooth and the wood dyed and sealed before any glue gets near it. This does mean that I cannot use wood glue for fastening them in, but since Perspex does not like wood glue anyway, superglue looks more likely if I can avoid sticking myself to it as well.



The first two bits from the slotting process are destined to make the doors in the wheelhouse and fill up the hole there: I was musing about the wheelhouse and the order of things next and realised that once I had fitted the roof, I will not be able to reach some parts of the frame to varnish the wood, so that got me thinking about what else needed

doing before this: shades of fitting the main deck! The doors seemed a good thing to make and I had set up to make the slotted frames as above anyway!

Looking at the finish on the outside after all of the woodwork, there were a few gaps here and there, especially where the 'planks' below the windows met the frame. How to fill these? I never have much success with wood fillers off the shelf as, although they claim to be able to be dyed, they are simply not absorptive enough and end up obvious 'fillers'. I was able to dredge some 'beech powder' from my finisher (ie wood dust) and I experimented by soaking this in dye and leaving it to dry. After a few days in summer, this was a hard crust that easily crumbled when I rubbed it, and mixing this in small amounts with the Titebond glue gave a pasty filler the right colour that went into the gaps easily, set



hard and when sanded back was still dark as required. This took the varnish well and it was goodbye to the gaps!

I have also decided to glue the furniture into the lower half of the wheelhouse as I have been adding detail to these on and off and now it is time to fit them... They seem to match the real furniture at least in general appearance, the photo shows them in place with the top half of the wheelhouse removed. When complete, the only view of this will be through the (small) windows of course. So far, they are dyed but not sealed and varnished, that will not be long now! I have also started thinking about the dashboard and the controls visible on it. The most prominent are the brass items and at this scale these need to be quite realistic. It is funny, but when making a live steam loco to this scale (ie 5" gauge) a pressure gauge, for me anyway, is a bought and working item. Here I need not fit a working one (or



two actually) and can make plausible models instead. I thought I would make water slide transfers using my printer for the dials, but I found that my printer did not have the resolution, so I have found some 'dials and instruments' stick-on prints that seem to be OK. I have been amusing myself making some bits for the dashboard as a result, and this is quite therapeutic! Photo shows the two pressure gauges (awaiting faces and 'glass': which I think I will use epoxy resin to fill up the recess), and six light switches. Many more bits to come though.

The fact that the wheelhouse is in two parts, upper and lower, means that I can work on one then let glue (for example) dry while I work on the other. I have been making the glazed windows (and retaining strips) for the upper, and since this involves cutting, gluing (with glue that I ought to leave for 24 hours) and clamping, the routine has been an hour or so on the upper, clamp it up and set it aside and then make some more fiddly bits for the lower bit. So far, I have the seven separately framed windows yet to make on the upper, and have made a few controls for the dashboard. These use (up!) bits of brass that are soldered together – justification for saving those off cuts from earlier projects. Lower temperature lead solder (the modern tin stuff is not as easy or as good) for parts where the solder is not visible, and silver solder for the rest for strength and a brass appearance. I always find silver soldering easier and more satisfying provided that I remember not to get small brass bits too hot! Some of the parts (such as brass rod in holes) are secured using Loctite 603 grade...if it is good enough to hold my loco driving wheels on while it is steamed, it should be OK for this. The photo shows progress so far: I won't chat about how I made each bit, it is just a fiddly business of trying to shape brass to look right (that 6 foot rule remember) and everyone will/can create their own way according to the item being modelled, materials available and patience! The next few bits include a large brass compass unit, some more instruments and an elaborate ships wheel to screw on to the protruding stud in the white housing. It is quite satisfying making these as I am freed from the usual worry about 'will it work when I steam up' that you get from live steam!

