

BARROWMORE

MODEL RAILWAY GROUP

"Modelling to a high standard amongst friends"



Workshop Notes: Degreasants

It is important that before painting (or soldering) a model, that it is chemically cleaned of oily/greasy fingerprints, etc. There are a number of solvents that can be used. In the old days, CTC (carbon tetrachloride), Arklone, or Genclene, were all commonly used, but they are not currently in favour - largely, I believe, because of safety concerns.

I use mostly one or other of two products - largely because they can be obtained easily: **Lighter fluid** can be bought from most general shops - usually in 100ml cans with a built-in spout, for about £1.15 (i.e. £11.50/litre). The Mostyn Team prefers this for cleaning wheel tyres. I keep a honey-jar full of this on my work - bench as a bath for small components both before and after soldering.

Isopropanol is what I use before painting and for cleaning wheel treads: there are many more carrying wheels on your rolling stock than picking-up wheels on your locomotives. Although it is nowhere near as important to clean wagon wheel treads, etc., if it is not done periodically, then running will spread what dirt is there, and pick-up and running will suffer. This is a very effective solvent and evaporates fast from treated surfaces. For wheel treads, I use pipe cleaners (buy packets from bigger tobacconists); and for larger areas on models, an old handkerchief or similar lint-free wipe. If you are wiping a smooth (non-abrasive) surface, you can even use paper hankies or toilet-paper. You can buy Isopropanol from a pharmacist (for example: the last lot I bought cost me £11 for a 2-litre container: about half the price of lighter fluid). It is also available (about the same price) from electronic stores such as Maplin's. Like lighter fluid, it is both poisonous and flammable: take care!

Of course, there are other proprietary degreasants available, but in small quantities they are either more expensive than those mentioned above, or have other drawbacks. For instance, you can buy cellulose thinners in large quantities relatively cheaply: BUT my wife violently objects to its smell!

Mechanical methods of tyre tread cleaning are an alternative, using wire brushes or glass-fibre scratch brushes. But in my experience, mechanical cleaning is more inclined to cause accidental damage to the model.

Do not be tempted to use a solution of washing-up **detergent** and water to dispose of greasy marks on models, prior to painting. Apparently products such as Fairy Liquid have additives in them to leave a 'shine' behind after use: dishes and cutlery then appear cleaner! But Precision Paints are on record as stating that this shiny deposit can be unfriendly to some paints. I am willing to take their word on the subject - and, any way, using a water-based cleanser means accepting a long 'drying' period before doing any further work on the model.