

BARROWMORE

MODEL RAILWAY GROUP

"Modelling to a high standard amongst friends"



Workshop notes: filing tips

Victorian engineers often avowed that it took over three thousand hours of practice before a mechanic was considered proficient with a file, and if you have tried to file a truly flat surface on any reasonably large work-piece, you will probably agree. But there are a few techniques which will help make the task of filing easier.

Hold the work-piece firmly in a rigidly mounted vice, with the surface to be filed at around elbow height and not projecting too far from the vice jaws. Heavy or very, accurate work is best done standing up. When attempting to file a large flat area, be careful not to get oil or greasy finger marks on the work-piece surface, as this can cause 'skidding' of the teeth on the affected area. Don't attempt to file thin sections with too coarse a file. Very thin sections (such as the edges of thin sheets) are best filed using a draw-filing technique, where the file is applied by holding it at right angles with a hand at each end of the file and pulling it towards you along the length of the work. An alternative method, which I often use, is to hold the file on the bench and move the work along it.

In fact, a good way to obtain a straight edge on thin work-pieces is not to file them at all: if you glue a piece of wet-or-dry paper to a sheet of plate glass, you have a very useful abrasive surface plate, which is very handy for truing edges on etched kit components.