

BARROWMORE

MODEL RAILWAY GROUP

"Modelling to a high standard amongst friends"

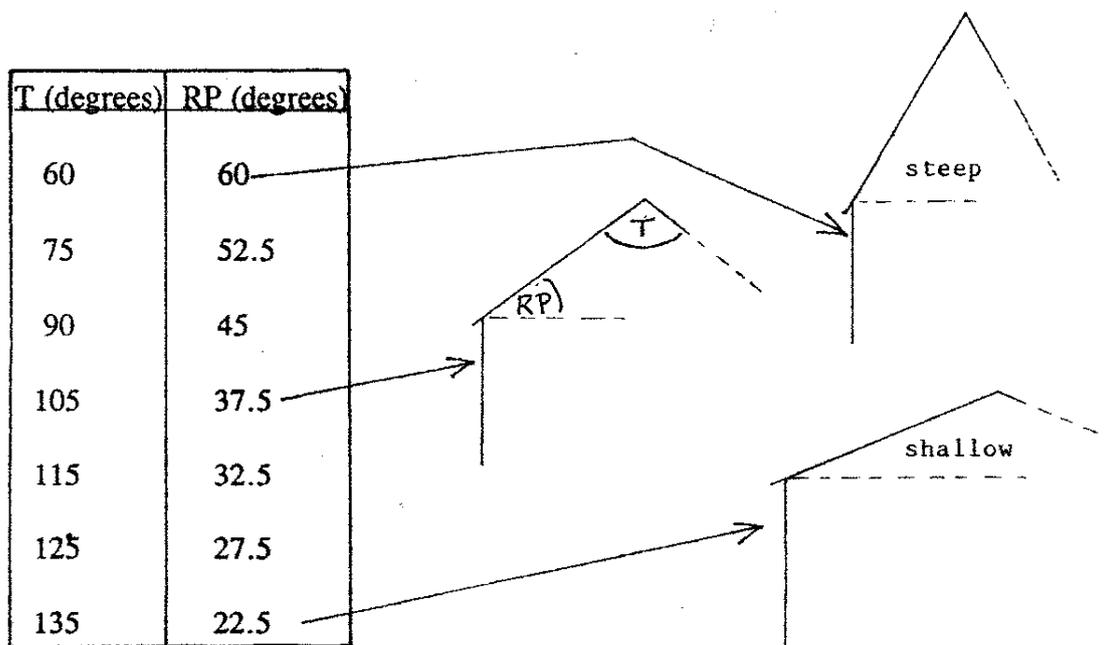


Workshop notes: roof ridge tiles

Some years ago, the Editor came across an illustrated Victorian builders merchants catalogue, in the Flintshire Record Office at Hawarden. It is undated, but a rough estimate is that it is from the 1870s or 1880s. Among a number of items of interest to modellers of Victorian architecture, is a listing of the pitches of standard 'off-the-shelf' roof ridge tiles. These are listed below ("T"), together with the associated roof pitch angles "RP".

All the tiles advertised were 18ins long, with just one pattern available in 24ins length also. Of note was the wide range of patterns for decorative crests - most of them a real 'pig' to model without some means of casting from a home-made mould.

In an interesting letter published in issue no.59 (1992) of "Model Railway Journal", David Sutton makes the point that the angle of the roof governs the minimum size of slates which can be used. A shallow pitch (e.g. 22 degrees) must have large slates; the commonest ("Countess") size is usually currently associated with 26.5 degrees; while the smallest slates must have a steep pitch. A shallow pitch and small slates allow capillary attraction of the rain water - i.e. the roof leaks!



Representing slates in 4mm scale is yet another problem! Moulded/embossed sheets of plastic alleged to model slates are produced in this country by Wills and Slaters; but both have significant drawbacks. I suspect that 3.5mm scale products from the USA and continent are similar, though I have no first-hand experience of them.

I have measured a dozen slates which came from the roof of my house (a 19th century down-market farm-worker's cottage) and they vary quite widely in thickness, from 5mm (4mm scale = 2½ thou) to just under 8mm (4mm scale = 0.0042"). I presume these examples came from North Wales – but I know that slates quarried in parts of Yorkshire (for instance) look to be twice as thick as Welsh ones. Scottish slates are apparently thicker than Welsh ones, measuring from 6mm to 15mm in thickness; they are also more green in colour.

At one time, the firm of Exactoscale marketed sheets of 4mm scale slate pattern and colour paper, with a self-adhesive backing; the paper had to be cut into strips, the backing peeled off, then carefully stuck into position in rows, overlapping as on prototype roofs. The paper looked to be about 80gsm weight – some 4thou or so thick – and so was quite true to the real thing. But unfortunately this line seems to have disappeared from Exactoscale's catalogue for the moment.

The only answer that I am aware of is to replicate Exactoscale's method but using ordinary office paper, painting it when stuck down. Very slow business! One temptation is to use Evergreen's 5thou plastic, cutting it into strips as with the paper and then gluing on with Mekpak. Paint as before. My personal experience in modelling slate roofs is limited, but I decided that plain paper was the best medium.