

IRREGULAR FEATURE

If you can't see it then it looks great

The “earth straps” (power supply wires) welded to the outside of the rails always bug me. I mean, how many lightning strikes do you get on a model railway track anyway? It might be excusable for a repair where ballast and scenery have been completed, but on new track work it looks very poor, especially when there is, I think, a very easy and better way.

I start by marking out and laying track and points in the usual way, up to the stage where the alignment and curves are right, just before the pins are pushed all the way home. I then mark the position of the power feeds (See diagram 1) on top of the rail and on the underlay between the sleepers using a texta.

Diagram 1
Mark track and ballast

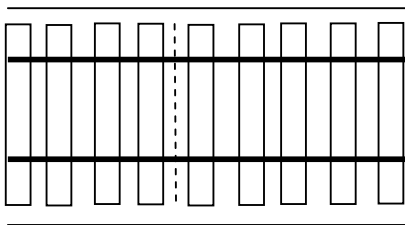


Diagram 2
Cut away joiners and separate sleepers

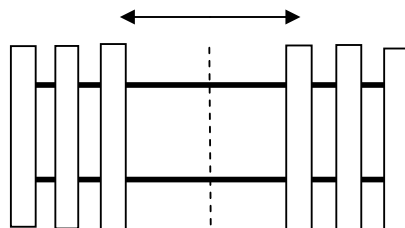
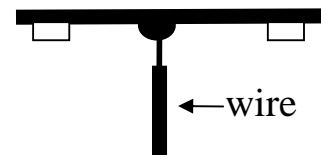


Diagram 3
Solder feed to bottom of rail



(Don't worry it rubs off the rail quite easily and the underlay will be covered in ballast anyway.) Then remove the piece of track, turn over and cut away the joiner between the sleepers and slide the sleepers away a little from that point (diagram 2) so that they don't melt from the heat of the soldering iron. Next tin and solder the wire dropper directly to the bottom of the rail. (See diagram 3) While it is cooling down drill a hole through both the underlay and baseboard, directly under where the rail was. I use a 6mm drill, or for the “non metrics” 1/4” to give a little clearance. Slide the sleepers back into position each side of the wire and re-lay the track feeding the wire into the hole at the same time. Bingo one almost invisible power feed even without ballast!

Catch you down the track...Tony Mikolaj.