

Groundworks

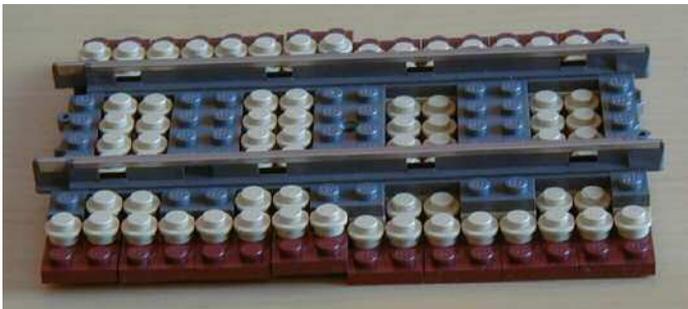
by Richard James



Over the course of this year I have been working on my LEGO trains; not so much above the track as below. Table top? Floral pattern carpet? Laminate flooring? Somehow track just laid onto these surfaces doesn't look right. I have seen some train photos on Brickshelf where the track has been laid outside on a strip of gravel - which looks great - so I wanted to do the same in LEGO.

Mixing up a sack load of 1x1 tan and grey plates and spreading them out would achieve this, but it would not be very practical for a one day display. So I started working on a gravel bed mosaic.

I played around with a few ideas on a piece of straight track to start with to see what would look best. I did try



Difference between infill level and dropped one plate

laying the track on top of brown plates and then filling in the holes with gravel bits (1x1 round plates in tan and light grey) but somehow this didn't look quite right. So I moved the infill down one plate and this looked much better.

As it turned out, having thus raised the track by two plates meant that it would fit perfectly with my road modules - more on that later.

Before I went too much further with designs for straight track I thought I had better work on the curves. If I couldn't get the curves to look good, there wasn't much point in carrying on. I considered various ideas using wings and wedges but finally ended up with a design that es only ordinary plates - well almost!

continued on page 4



Curved track - assembled and components

Also in this issue ...

BrickFest 2006

by Peter Reid

Page 7



Dragon by Bryce McGlone

BrickFest may be expensive, but it's a real eye opener, a great social adventure, and a lot of fun. You only live once!

Billund Factory Tour

by David Tabner

Page 6



Details of the group visit to the LEGO factory in Billund and a trip to the original LEGOLand.

Village Buildings

by James Stacey

Page 9



Close up photos of two of James' detailed village buildings showing various building techniques. Further photographs can be seen at www.minifig.co.uk

“The Association Matters”

Club News

Chairman's Report

Simon Bennett (chairman@brickish.org)

I hope everyone had a sufficiently LEGO-filled summer but you are still planning to come along to the remaining events of 2006. Particularly the annual Brickish Association Christmas Party at LEGOLand Windsor, details of which are on the next page.

The highlight of the last few months was the trip to LEGO at Billund, offered by Jan Beyer of LEGO and organised by Alison Pike. Pictures and reports of the trip can be found at www.brickish.org and in this issue. I'd like to thank Alison for taking on the arrangements for the members who went to Denmark as I know they all had a great time.

Other events held included Michael LeCount's fest at his place in Sheffield, the fourth Great Western Lego Train Show, and another excellent Scotfest.

The Window into the Community initiative expanded over the summer when we were asked by the Milton Keynes LEGO Brand Store to fill a display cabinet in the shopping centre. Details can be found on the website. The store told us that they got many requests for instructions to build the display models. I'm a little disheartened by that as the purpose of the display was to show what one can do with bricks when you stop having to be led by instructions, but, overall, the display certainly drove customers to the shop and was another great advertisement for the Association.

On the subject of LEGO Brand Stores, as some of you who use them may have discovered, LEGO are in the process of closing a number of stores as they were not meeting targets. I think this is very regrettable, but if it is necessary to ensure the LEGO Company's return to long term prof-

itability, so be it. I only hope the company realises that, while they can presumably make greater profit by selling through Shop at Home, there is no substitute for a presence on the high street, where parents and grandparents can see what the company offers and buy easily and in many cases on a whim. We all know they make great sets, but we wouldn't if we had to rely on the Bionicle shelf underneath the MegaBlocs at Tesco.

I can't let this issue go by without mentioning the two romantic events of the summer involving Brickish members. The wedding of Melody Caddick and Christian Krueztzfeldt, and the engagement of Yvonne Doyle and Peter Reid. Congratulations to both couples.

Simon

Editor's Comments

William Howard (newsletter@brickish.org)

They say "a picture is worth a thousand words", but sometimes you don't feel able to write captions let alone an article around them. So, for those of you who prefer to express yourself with high-quality photographs rather than words, we present the first "photo-montage" article in this issue. We hope the pictures speak clearly for the various techniques that James employs in his buildings and provide inspiration for detailing your own MOCs.

In the last issue, in Brick Trick 2 it wasn't clear that the green "plate" was in fact part of a baseplate - apologies for that.

To help us send the Brick Issue to you, the member profile page on the website has been changed to allow you to enter your address details - this is for the purpose of

keeping the membership address list up to date. These details are not mandatory and can only be populated by you - we cannot enter this information from our off-line database. We encourage you to fill these details in.

Please be assured that your personal details are only ever visible to authorised committee members and that the details are not displayed anywhere else on the web site. For more information please refer to the Association's Privacy Statement.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and for those of you not coming to the Christmas Party, I hope you receive some LEGO over the holiday season (those going to the party will only have themselves to blame if they don't!)

William

Membership

The annual subscription is £8. For resident UK members renewing for two years the rate is £14. Subscriptions fall due on the first day of the original joining month.

Make cheques payable to 'The Brickish Association' and send to Jon Reynolds, The Brickish Association, 29 Paulden Road, Lostock Gralam, Northwich, CW9 7PQ

You must be at least sixteen years of age to join.

Events

Christmas Party, LLW: 2 December

At the Mansion House, LEGOLand Windsor, please see the articles in this issue for further details and check the web site for last minute updates.

BI-11: 2 March 2007

BI-11 scheduled to be posted to members. Please send any material for inclusion to the Editor. Copy deadline is the 2nd February 2007.

BA Christmas Party

by James Sutton

Once again, the Brickish Association's Christmas Party will be held in the Mansion House at LEGOLand Windsor. This year the date for your diary is the 2nd of December.

The cost will be £50 for Brickish members and £35 for children (children must be accompanied by a Brickish member.) Apologies for the price rise for children this year, but this is due to price rises by our hosts.

The schedule of events is almost complete - we are just finalising the times.

Events will include the usual: talk from Guy Bagley - Chief Modelmaker; make and take with the modelmakers; used brick rummage - ex-modelshop stock; Pass the Parcel; auction; Big Shop shopping; and other events to be confirmed.



Auction in full-swing (or Tony power-lifting?): Photo by Tim David



Pass the Parcel: Photo by Tim David

Please note that there may be an earlier start than previous years as the Big Shop will be open to the public on the day, and we may need to make our purchases there before it opens.

If you are coming please email christmas06@brickish.org with the number of member and child tickets required. As we need to confirm numbers with LEGOLand before the event you cannot turn-up and pay on the day. Payment must be made in advance. Please send cheques payable to 'The Brickish Association' to Michael LeCount, 102 Langsett Avenue, Wadsley, Sheffield, S6 4AB

BA Tableware

by Michael LeCount

By popular demand, the Brickish Association have had produced a range of tableware. These will be officially unveiled at this year's Christmas party.

We currently have both sizes of Latte mug available for purchase and samples of all the other items for viewing. We are now taking orders for all the other items which will be ordered in early December, hopefully for a pre-Christmas delivery. Members not attending the party will be able to order by post.

To place an order, please send details of your requirements and a cheque (made payable to the Brickish Association) for 25% of the cost to Michael LeCount. Please note that the cheque will not be cashed until we have taken delivery of your order. The items will then be shipped to you once the outstanding balance has been



received, including any additional postage costs, unless any prior arrangements have been made.

340ml Latte Mug, Standard size	£4.80
440ml Latte Mug, Large size	£5.50
250ml Cup and Saucer (No logo on saucer)	£6.30
250ml Cup and Saucer (Logo on Saucer)	£6.80
340ml Cup and Saucer (No logo on Saucer)	£6.80
340ml Cup and Saucer (Logo on Saucer)	£7.30
450ml Medium Teapot	£13.50
780ml Standard Teapot	£15.50
Milk Jug	£5.50
Sugar Bowl	£3.50
28cm Dinner Plate	£6.00
19cm Desert Plate	£3.80

(It is possible to get plates and bowls in other sizes. Please contact Michael to discuss any requirements.)



Groundworks

by Richard James

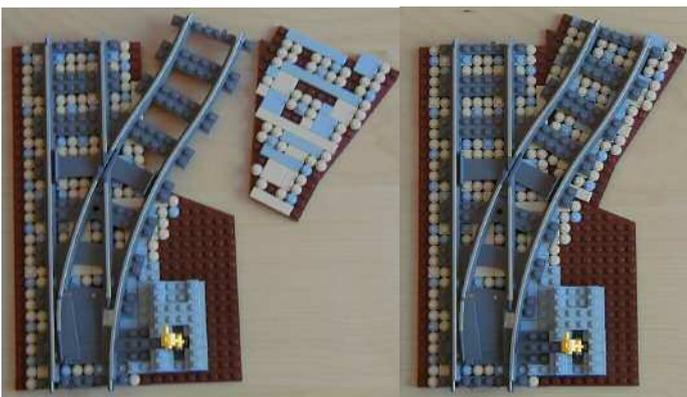
continued from page 1

Where two curves join I had to come up with something a little different. The final result does have gaps but these are fairly minimal. If the track is laid on cloth of a similar shade of brown these gaps probably won't show.



Two types of curved track joiners.

So now I can make an oval of track sitting on ballast, but if I can't do points it probably is still not worth doing. The point ballast did present more of a challenge and I tried several configurations of wedge plates before I found one that worked for the ground layer. For the gravel layer I found that I had to use tiles because of studs not lining up. Again a lot of trial and error was involved because the tiles also had to hold the brown plates together. In the end I still end up with two separate sections as the studs on the wedge plate section do not line up with those on the main section.

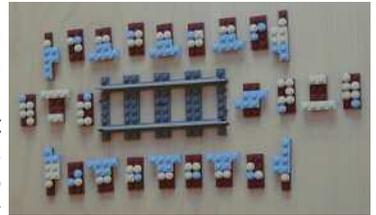


Point track bed

With the designs done, the next consideration was could I actually get all the parts? I won't go into the maths; I'm sure most of you have realised by now that this project will require thousands of 1x1 tan round plates, not to mention all the other parts. I only had a handful of 1x1 tan round plates and there weren't that many more on Bricklink and they were prohibitively priced. So I enquired about buying parts from LEGO direct, which started my stint as the bulk order monkey. However, before the bulk order was placed, LEGO Factory was dra-

matically revised and I found that I could use that to produce all the track bed I wanted - at least for straight track. I also used LEGO Factory to acquire a large bag of 1x1 tan round plate for use on curves and points. Other parts which aren't available via LEGO Factory I was able to buy from Bricklink. Please don't ask me how much this has all cost - I am deliberately not counting!

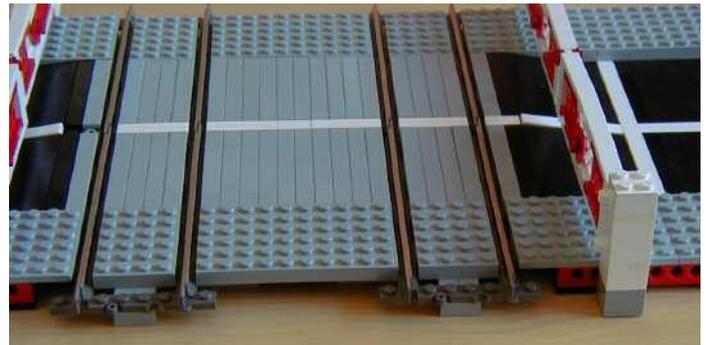
People who have seen examples of the track bed have made comments on the theme of 'How do you have the patience to put all those little pieces together?' If I did try to do it all in one go, it probably would drive me bonkers.



All those little pieces!

Do a few lengths of track at a time and it quickly builds up over a week or two. Also each track bed piece is made up of a number of repeating modules of only a few pieces each, so building becomes a fairly automatic process.

I mentioned earlier that the two plate rise in the track height made the track compatible with my road modules - at least when it comes to the level crossing.

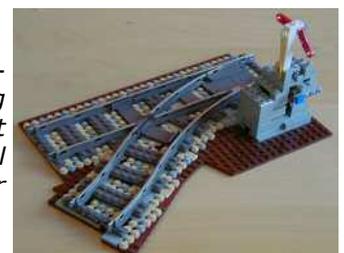


Level crossing - Road modules and track bed meet in harmony

The road modules are three plates high at the road - 16x8 black tiles joined together by ordinary plates underneath - and five plates high at the pavement. The 6x8x1 slope which leads up to the track on the level crossing is set at the same level of black tiles rather than sitting on top of them. This makes for a smoother ride for the minifigs in their cars and trucks, and means the track needs to be raised by two plates to match height with the slope. I worked on the road modules and the track bed at different times and hadn't thought much about compatibility so this was a very happy coincidence.

I have got a fair amount of work ahead of me constructing all these various modules but I hope to have something to show at the Christmas party.

(Ed: In a second related article, Richard will be describing his RCX controlled point motor and integrated signal system - a prototype for which is shown.)



Member Profile: John Barnes

* What is your earliest LEGO memory?

My sister received a LEGO set for Christmas and I didn't because boys were supposed to play with Meccano.

* What was the earliest MOC you built?

But we shared, so I got to build some small buildings. The only pieces we had were roof pieces, white bricks and red windows and an odd plate which if I remember right was about 4x8 with one corner curved. It doesn't appear to be catalogued anywhere these days.

* What brought you out of the dark ages?

I came out of my dark ages quite recently at the end of 1995 when I noticed some cool little Technic sets for sale. I bought a few over the next couple of years until the Mindstorms set was released in 1998.

* What was your greatest LEGO moment?

I think that there have been numerous great moments, like the day a little old granny admitted to me she was a LEGO "fiend" and had a stash of bricks she always had to hide whenever her grandkids would visit. But I think the Inside Tour was an inspiring event I will long remember.

* What LEGO-related activity do you spend most time doing?

That depends on what phase I'm in. I am very busy working on new Mindstorms sensor design at the moment, and haven't had a chance to build for the last 6 months. But I expect that will change soon and I will get a chance to build.

* What is the best MOC you've ever built?

The most fun I've had with a MOC was the microscale layout I built to host my N gauge train. It consisted of a little of everything, landscaping, a waterway, bridges, houses and commercial buildings.

* What models are you working on now?

I am a very methodical builder, thinking for days if not weeks or months before actually starting. At the moment I am in electronics mode, but, as I stated above, I expect that to change soon. At which time I hope to get going on building a Cotswold village. This will be for our local LUG (LUCNY) layout which has been nominally flat to date. I hope to build in some elevation in this model. I have been browsing online images and reviewing my personal memories of living in the Cotswolds when I was a youngster.

* What is your favourite LEGO Element?

The 1x2 plate with centre stud, without a doubt. It turns up in just about every building and train model I build.

* What would be your dream LEGO element?

The piece I want most is the 33 degree double concave slope. Add to that a whole range of 33 degree slope parts in the various useful colours and life would be wonderful.

* How do you feel about modifying parts

I happily make modified parts if there is either no way to make the structure as I want it or if the resulting structure will be too weak to stand transportation. Most of the time, I use readily replaceable parts as the donor pieces and work with enough precision that the resulting new part often goes unnoticed unless viewed by someone really sharp eyed.

* Are you a collector or a builder?

I am very much a builder. The only unopened sets I have are ones that I haven't had time to tear into yet.

* What's your favourite set and why?

I think, because I'm a builder and not a collector, that sets themselves are unimportant. I thought that the Znap sets were pretty cool as a source of cheap motors.

* What's the last set you paid full price for?

I just bought the smallest Batman set because I had to have the cat-woman minifig.

* With which AFOLs do you collaborate?

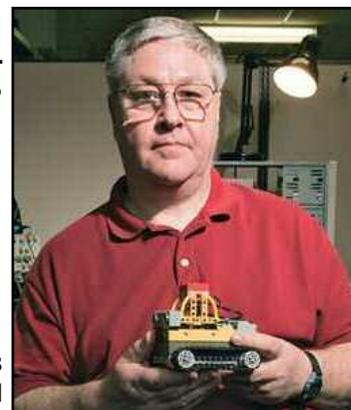
There are four main groups I am involved with in person - my local LUCNY, the Washington DC WAMALUG, the Brickish Association, and the organizing group who put on BrickFest every year. I am also active in various online groups including certain areas of Lugnet and other groups involved in robotics.

* What do your non-AFOL friends make of your hobby?

Most of them simply don't understand.

* Apart from LEGO, what else are you in to?

I am a serious motor sport fan. I used to race a Dodge Neon in SCCA races in the US North East until both I and my car started showing signs of age. I am also into electronics and programming which sometimes are related to LEGO but not always.



John Barnes - Master of the Scalpel

LEGO Related Web Sites

compiled by David Graham

A few months back, Pete posed the question "which LEGO related web-sites do you regularly surf" on the BA forums. Fifteen people responded and, excluding the Association's own website, the top 12 sites are listed below.

Site (votes)

news.lugnet.com (13)
www.brickshelf.com (12)
www.lego.com (8)
www.brickset.com (6)
www.bricklink.com (6)
www.eurobricks.com (5)
www.fbtb.net (5)
www.jlug.net (4)
www.legofan.org (4)
www.peeron.com (4)
www.classic-castle.com (3)
www.mocpages.com (3)

Comment

Lugnet - a large range of discussion boards especially news & trains
Gallery of LEGO pictures & MOCs "*for a fix of models*"
The LEGO Group (including Shop At home - shop.lego.com)
LEGO set reference
Buy & sell any LEGO bricks
"to see if anything has leaked"
Star Wars discussion
"for all the bad language & naughty MOCs"
"dull with a capital D"
LEGO set inventory
For castle fans
MOCs

Event Report: Billund Factory Tour

by David Tabner

The Billund Factory tour of September 2006 started (for most) very early on the morning of Monday the 18th. We gathered, trying to find a check-in desk at Gatwick, but the group did not last as we were squeezed through first check-in then the excessive security. We rejoined at the departure gate, all showing signs of nervous anticipation but in a relaxed way. The weather was of puffy separated clouds over Gatwick but this turned into continuous superimposed layers over Billund, giving a dull grey appearance to our first view of Denmark. Three taxis took us to our first destination - the LEGO Factory. Well actually, they took us to a LEGO office building and we had to walk the rest of the way. En-route we passed a tanker lorry discharging ABS pellets into a silo - as the factory uses 48 tonnes of pellets a day, this is a regular occurrence. Once at the factory entrance, we met up with the remainder the group - and of course Jan. Before entering the production areas, we saw aerial photos of how the factory had evolved from a small factory within the town to the massive buildings it now occupies, and also one of the old hand operated moulds.

Inside the factory proper, we saw raw ABS in great volume and the systems used to send it to the moulds - which looked like giant vacuum cleaners. The mould storage room was very impressive with many shelves of inactive moulds; big squarish chunky metal things which cost a lot of money. The areas where the moulds were in active use were even better. There stood the injection press machines, either fed locally or remotely by a system of pipes. Standing in rows, each machine producing a different element as determined by the mould fitted within. Some machines produced larger elements singly, others used sprues to make several in a single press. The latter incorporated an arm that reached down as the mould separated and it lifted the sprue out, the small elements falling away as they were wrenched from the mould. The sprue itself was ejected by the arm up and out the back. The finished elements were then conveyed out into tubs that were set at the side of the roadway. Once the tub was full, its stand would rotate half a turn and place an alternate tub there. The full tubs were periodically collected by a robotic machine that was slowly driving around the factory on a guided route. We saw several more areas like this, some larger than others, all churning out LEGO; two million elements a day. We also saw machines that injected two different colours or types of plastic into the same element - mostly for Bionicle parts.

The highlight of the trip came next as we entered the



Photo: Jason Railton

Factory storeroom. It is a great warehouse within the Factory and is completely automated. The aisles run for hundreds of metres and the top shelves are over four stories up. On every shelf of every aisle boxes of LEGO elements were stored: hundreds, thousands, of boxes in total. In each aisle a single machine worked, running on rails and with a column as tall as the top shelf, a lift upon it that could accommodate several boxes at a time. The system was fed with a roller-conveyor that delivered boxes to a waiting area at the end of each aisle. Every now and again the machine-lift would swoop down, roll some boxes off, roll the new ones on, before departing at speed back to wherever it had been programmed to put them. We stood there, watching in near silence, mesmerised at the scale of it.

Next Jan took us to a separate facility where the elements are counted and bagged, and the sets boxed. Long lines of small feeders stood, parting out elements by number into the poly-bags. A whole line of these 'counters' are needed for just one bag. The bags are then delivered to another assembly line, which ran in an interesting U shape, for the packing and sealing of sets. The line starts with the flat, pre-cut boxes being fed into a machine that folds and glues them; obviously leaving the lid open! As the boxes proceed along the conveyor, poly-bags are dropped into them and oversized parts (like baseplates) are added by hand. Another machine tamps down the contents and finally glues the top down.

With the factory tour ended, we walked the short distance to our rooms in the LEGO Village. Jan, assisted by Christian, had provided a couple of large tubs of surplus LEGO for us to buy from. These were duly tipped out onto the floor of one of the rooms and we all squeezed in to rummage. The rest of the day was spent chatting outside and drinking beer before we headed off, in groups, to an Italian restaurant in the centre of Billund. The food was very nice - and it was interesting to see that their 'Lego Pizza' had been renamed!

The next morning we were to meet with some designers, but before that though we partook of the excellent continental breakfast. No LEGO but they had yoghurt in large milk-type cartons (not everyone read the label

before pouring and thus got a surprise) and an interesting 'double cheese screw wire slicer'.

We met Jan at the entrance to the building which was our destination and we occupied a conference room in the roof. We were given a talk by three designers principally on 'illegal moves' and the processing that a design must go through, including prolonged heat exposure in a low temperature industrial oven (to see if it will hold its shape), before it is approved for production. We then went to the building across the street where there is a display of all the current year's sets, and there was a further talk by the designers about their models in the current range. Throughout this many questions and comments were made by us, most of which the designers agreed with.

Then we went to LEGOLand Billund. We didn't need our vouchers, the annual passes were enough alone. The weather had been nice in the morning but in the early afternoon it got rather wet. LLB was quite empty, which was nice, and personally I sampled the faster rides first; which were more violent than LLW and no seat belts either. Their Jungle Coaster (themed as something Racers there) was far better than Windsor's and the rapids were fun, especially the fast lift which elevates the boats to the slide. The driving school was much better too with the nippy little cars I remember from my trip to LLB in 1992, compared to the slow sluggish ones at LLW. I didn't actually go on it but I observed it from the rather fast monorail (which I had to myself). The models about the park were great. The ones for the rapids (Viking themed) were superbly done, most of them were singing in Danish too. I believe everyone liked the pink flamingos. My favourite was the intricately detailed Oriental



temple in red, blues and white. There was also a great giant model of an oil/gas rig in their Miniland, and the big tortoises on the pirate boat-ride were rather endearing, as were the pirate pelicans not far away from there. The best model of all though, I felt, was the one in the airport that we saw after leaving LLB, a green globe with many pointy hills on it and little tan towers on them. In the airport and waiting for our plane we perused the LEGO Shop and effectively took over the "children's" LEGO lounge where there were LEGO computer games and several rummage basin-tables. The return flight was uneventful and on time. We gathered together one last time in front of the customs sections and bade our good-byes.

I had a great time and look forward to repeating the trip. To end, I would like to thank Jan Beyer for arranging the tour and meeting, Alison Pike for organising the trip, and Alastair Disley for arranging the accommodation.

Event Report: BrickFest 2006

by Peter Reid

We planned it several months in advance. Yvonne and I would go to BrickFest as our main holiday of 2006. There was no reason not to go; we're both very keen when it comes to matters of the brick.

Flights to Washington are very expensive, and it's a good idea to book early to let your finances recover before going out there.

About a month before the fest various co-ordinators began to demand information about the models we were bringing. I had no idea what I was going to display, so I just made some vague stuff up and allocated myself an over-generous chunk of table space.

Long after the cards were filled out I began to get an idea of what I'd take with me. It was important for both of us



Street by Yvonne

to display models of a high standard. We were representing the UK and Ireland (and the Brickish Association of course!) so we felt compelled to show our very best work.

We spent the last few weekends at home surrounded by semi-constructed display pieces, staring vaguely at piles of bricks. I only really got into gear during the final weeks.

Eventually, after much deliberation, we were packed and ready to go. There is an art to packing precious models for international transport. Basically you have to modularise everything before bagging each separate module



Nadezhda by Leonard Hoffman

in a sensible manner. Packing clothes in with models is recommended. I managed to cushion all my stuff quite nicely. It didn't make much difference though. The baggage-handlers obviously had lots of fun kicking the hell out of our suitcases - bless 'em!

We arrived at the venue and it was clear that it was going to be an excellent, colossal event. The main hall was massive. We were early arrivals so we could afford to be leisurely and sociable. Set-up took much longer than normal as there was a good deal of repair for both of us, thanks to our baggage-handling friends.

So Yvonne went to the Town section, and I found myself a nice spot in the Mecha area. Then I met my idols. There were lots of people who knew me from my models ('Oh, you're the turtle guy') and I also wore my 'Legoloverman' T-shirt on Day One, which proved to be a good move. Everyone soon had badges, though, which aided identification considerably. (Let me just tell you about the badges. They were really good, custom engraved 1x8 brick badges with our names, club, place of origin and BrickFest 2006 written on them. Some peo-



Dome by Jon Palmer

I missed the talk about customising minifigs, and the people who hosted it tracked me down, demanding to see some illegal moves. I told them I was pure these days. Then I showed them a little box I'd stashed under the table.

Yvonne and I thoroughly enjoyed the official LEGO meetings we attended. Jamie Berard's 'Stressing the Elements' and the unforgettable '50 years of LEGO ads' were very enjoyable. We had to go back and see the adverts compilation again the next day because it was so damn good.

On Friday night there was a period of voting for the awards. Unfortunately, as we'd messed up our MOC cards it was a hassle for people to vote for us. Despite this setback, Yvonne got a nomination for her brilliant Town display and I got an award for 'Joint Tech' in the Mecha category.

It was a whirlwind of social activity. Fortunately I already knew many people from the Internet as I'm usually not very good with names. All that time spent hanging out in various forums paid off handsomely. There are many more stories I could share about BrickFest; most of them totally unsuitable for publication. (*Ed: I'll be the judge of that!*) It was four and a half days of living the AFOL life in a well-suited environment. To actually live like that for so long, with so many other LEGO fans, was a dream come true. We realised on the last day that it was something we couldn't miss again and told our new friends that we'd return next year. BrickFest costs a huge amount of cash compared to, say, the AGM, but it is a four-day event - a way of life rather than a traditional fest experience.

I would urge anyone who's tempted by BrickFest to go. It's a real eye opener, a great social adventure, and a lot of fun. It does cost a fortune, but you only live once!



3vii Escort Frigate by Mark Sandlin

ple had dates going way back, huge stacks of 1x8s listing their various affiliations and aliases.)

So I got to meet my heroes. I shook the hands of (and in many cases hugged) guys who've built models that have made me shout with joy at my computer. There was one guy who looked out for us during the entire weekend - Adrian Drake. He's the man who built the Tribunal; an enormous spaceship from some years back. This time around he had a six foot, steampunk helicopter which was utterly beautiful. I met them all - Sandlin, Giddens, Hoffman, Palmer - true heroes of the genre, and a lovely bunch of guys.

There were many fantastic models on display from the 400+ other Lego enthusiasts attending, so there was much to see. From larger than life naked male sculptures (with a tastefully added fig leaf during public hours) to cranes that towered impossibly over the Technic section - miracles of engineering and real triumphs of design.

There were numerous meetings throughout the event. Informal 'round table' discussions for people to chat about specialist stuff like Steampunk, the MechaHub website and Capital Ship construction. They made me co-host of the Mecha Joint Tech discussion when I was disgustingly hung over, but it was a great laugh.



Enterprise by Brandon Griffith

Village Buildings

by James Stacey



Me and My Minifigs

by Siân Hockaday

I am a minifig lover; to me the whole point of LEGO is to build environments for my minifigs. I have over two hundred minifigs from many different themes. My favourites are the most recent releases. I like how both the facial expressions and clothes have become more detailed in recent years, although my collection also contains a few 'hands in pocket' (pre-1978) minifigs dating from my childhood. I can remember them being sold, and thinking how cool they were compared to the older, larger chunky homemaker figures made of bricks. Whereas today, compared to modern minifigs, they seem very simple and old fashioned.



David Brickham

The first poseable minifigs I remember having as a child were the all white classic space figures, with helmets and oxygen bottles on their backs. At that time I only had a few minifigs and my entire LEGO collection fitted into one large plastic ice cream container. I have vivid memories of using my bricks to build a tower (very square and in multiple colours) with a secret entrance (a hole on one side) inspired by all the Enid Blyton adventure books I used to read.

My husband, Ed, bought me an Exploriens space LEGO set in 1996 as a fun Christmas present. I enjoyed it so much that I soon found myself covertly downloading photos from Brickshelf and buying more, and more, and more LEGO. I (well 'we' really, it's Ed's LEGO too) now have quite a large collection that fills one sideboard and the bottom half of a wardrobe, but my main passion is still the minifigs.

I have been wondering what would be the technical term for a minifig collector... a minifigologist? a LEGO-anthropologist? a collector of Danish miniature plastic figurines?

Fortunately, for the sake of my savings, I am not so keen on the flesh coloured minifigs; specifically the poorly pale pink ones. I do like the brown ones. But the pink ones... aaaarg! LEGO elves, what were you thinking when you chose that colour? Did you have a hangover?

So, although I do have some poorly pale pink figures, it is the yellow ones I love. Yellow is such a nice, happy, warm colour. And I do have fun choosing yellow heads to replace poorly pale pink ones.



Some female faces

If I had a magic wand, I would want:

- * More female figures, even if they all do have to wear lipstick.
- * More hairstyles. I would definitely remodel the stan-



Cool dudes in orange

dard female ponytail - it's just too spiky. (Although, talking of spiky, I am very impressed with the recent manga-style hair on the Exo-Force minifigs.)

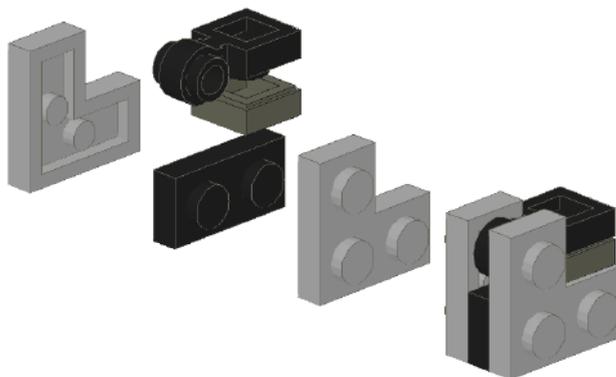
- * More happy facial expressions.
- * More hats. In particular a bowler hat, for the minifig about town. A deer stalker would be nice too, for Sherlock Holmes.
- * More minifig utensils. I like minifig utensils even when they are a bit big, like the mammoth walkie-talkies and mutant bananas. I was really pleased to get some tommy-guns in the recent batman sets and so will, at last, be able to have a gangster with a tommy-gun standing on the running board of a vintage car.

Meanwhile, I have to say that I have lots of lovely minifigs and think that the LEGO minifigure is a design classic. I like my minifigs so much I find it hard to say which one is my favourite. So here are a few of them:

- * Spiderman. He's just so cool in the dark blue.
- * Harry Potter, probably because I love the books, and Ron and Hermione and Ginny and ...
- * Any minifig in bright citrus orange clothes. Pale baby blue is nice too, as is the cabernet sauvignon red and deep, deep dark blue.
- * The monsters and bad guys. Only LEGO could make Darth Vader look cute (a bit like a Jack Russell terrier I think)
- * The 'Life on Mars' aliens... aah.

I think I'll stop there, or I'll just be listing all the different LEGO themes.

BRICK TRICKS - 3A



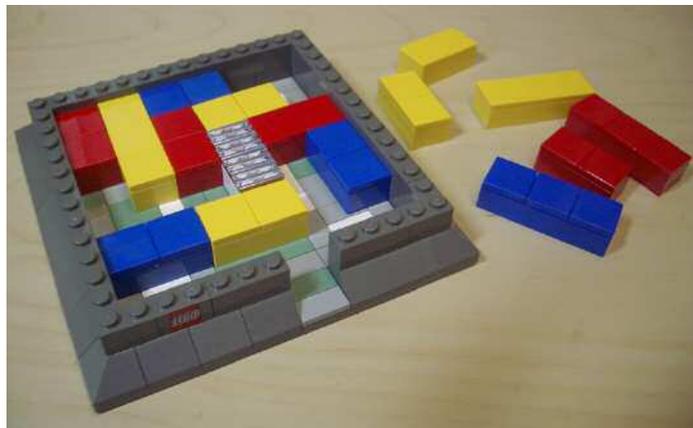
SOBS: Studs On Both Sides

Game On - LEGO Traffic Jam

by Fiona Dickinson

Make a game out of a toy ... and something a bit more involved than LEGO Jenga™.

Traffic Jam (also known as Rush Hour) is a solitaire puzzle which simulates a traffic jam on a grid square during rush hour; where cars and trucks block each other.



Move the other vehicles back and forth so the chrome car can exit

The goal is to have the main vehicle (usually red or silver) escape from this congestion as quickly as possible. The cars and trucks can only move forwards and backwards - no sideways moves or jumps are allowed.



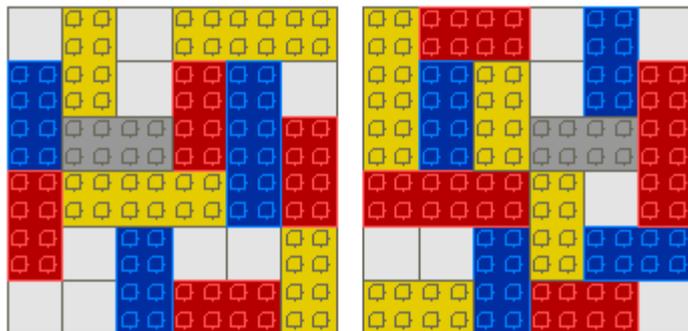
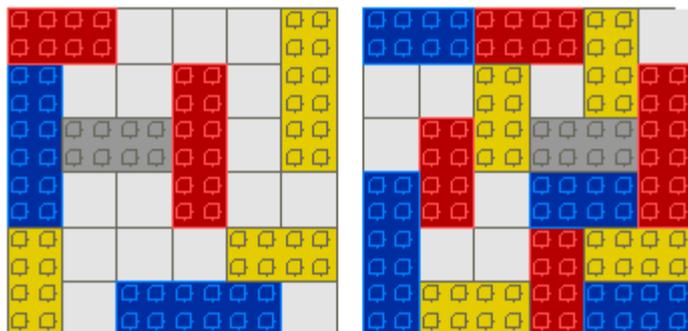
Sample board and vehicles based on a 2x2 grid

Like all good puzzles, the difficulty level depends on the initial layout of the pieces and can vary from very simple to almost impossible.

To create your own version of Traffic Jam you will need a 6 x 6 board with an exit on the third row, your car (1:2), 11 other cars (also 1:2) and 4 trucks (1:3).

Like Cathedral, I based the grid of my board on a 2x2 tile, so the cars are 2x4 while the trucks are 2x6.

The commercial game comes in many styles - cars, trains, animals, etc - and has extra puzzle levels available to buy as decks of cards.

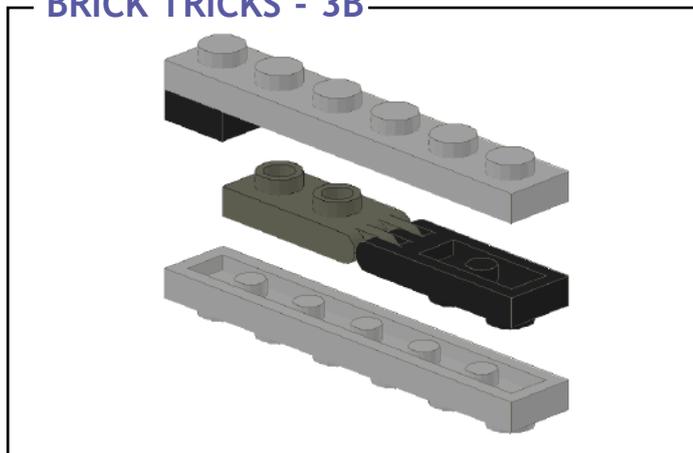


Sample levels, ranging from very simple (top left) to almost impossible (bottom right)

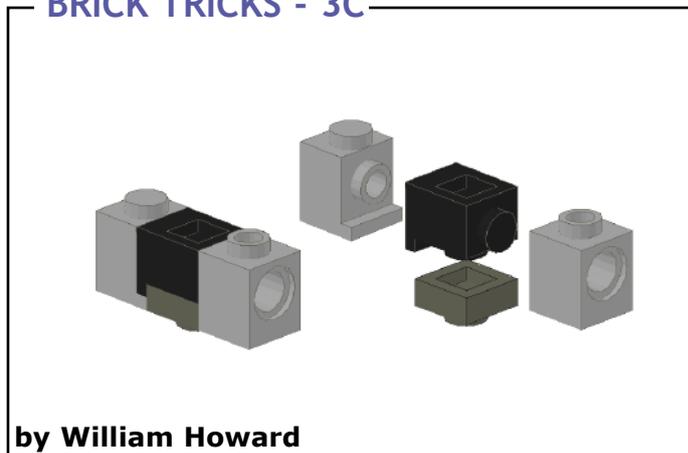
There are several online¹ versions of the puzzle and there are many starting positions available with various degrees of difficulty, some samples are shown above.

1 <http://www.puzzles.com/products/rushhour.htm>

BRICK TRICKS - 3B



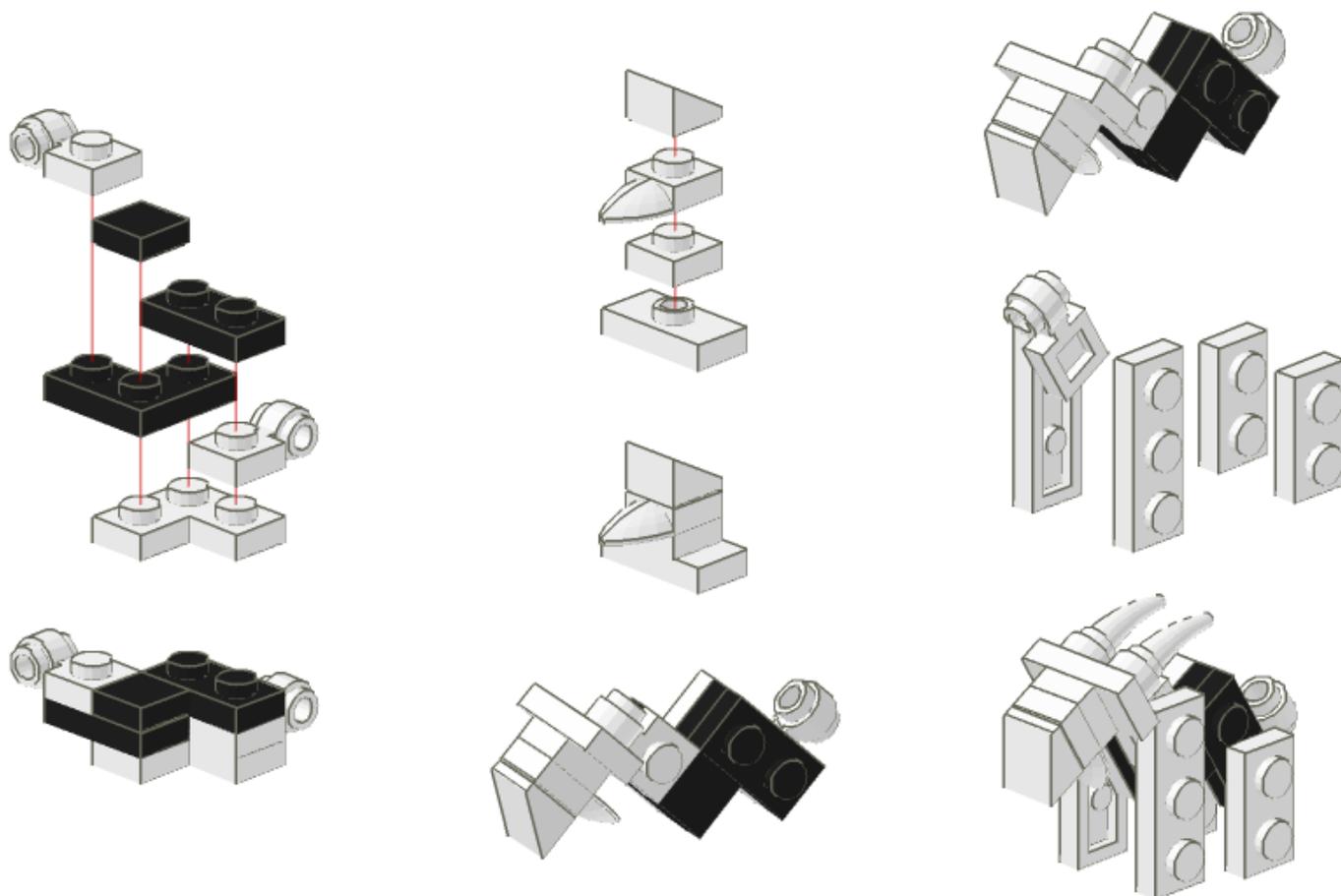
BRICK TRICKS - 3C



by William Howard

10. Goat

by Jason Railton

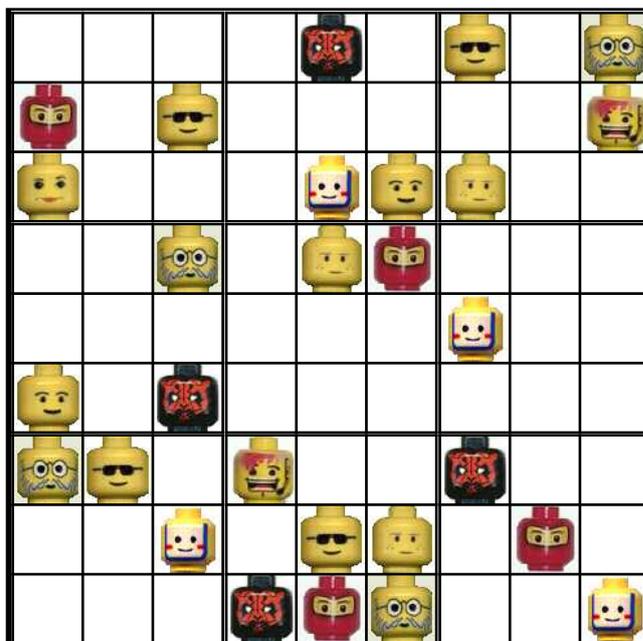


LEGO Puzzle - Fig-Duko

by Fiona Dickinson

Sudoku with a LEGO twist!

Complete the grid by entering minifig heads so that no row, column or 3x3 sub-grid contains a duplicate.



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