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PUTTING UP THE WIRES

– Part 1

Peter Marriott experiments with a Viessmann catenary starter set and lists a few catenary dos and don'ts.



Viessmann with Roco bls class 465 loco

As one who models both UK and European layouts I can remember what a hurdle it was for me to finally get round to erecting some catenary. It took me years to stop buying just diesel locomotives and take the plunge and purchase a Swiss electric loco. I still get a little nervous when I start putting up the first mast – will it be in the right place? Will the wires meet! – I have to confess that building a stretch of catenary is one of the most satisfying aspects of current day modelling. When the wires are up you really can stand back and admire your handiwork.

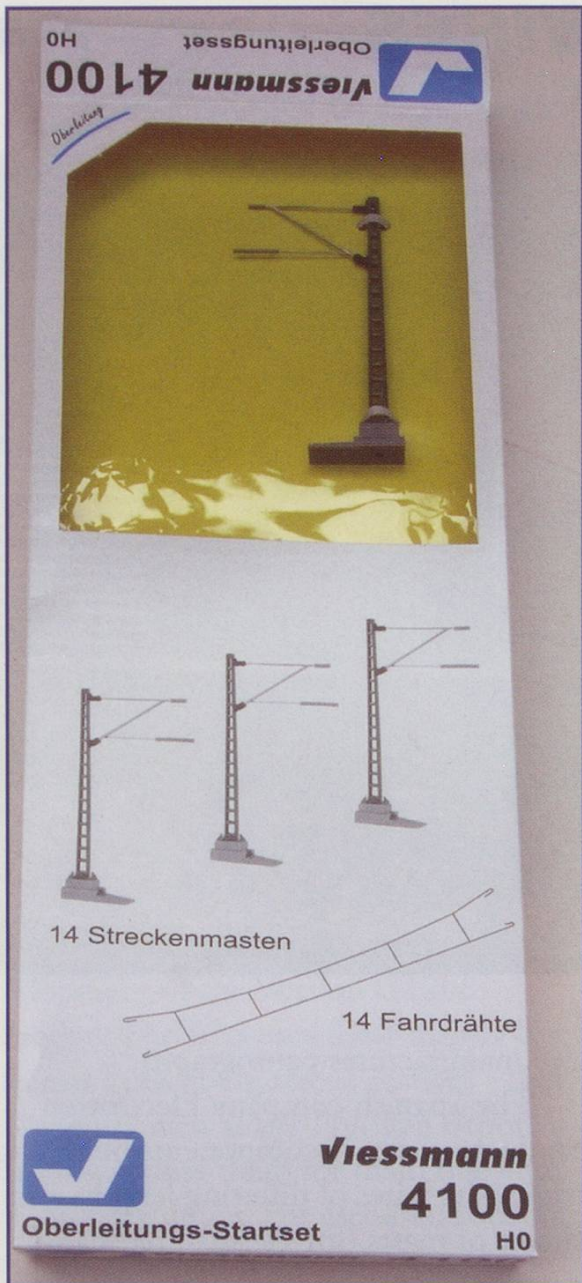
Sommerfeldt manufacture an extensive range of catenary parts catering for N, HO, HOm, Om, TT and O scales. Their parts include German (DB), Italian (FS), French (SNCF), Belgian (SNCB), Swiss (SBB and narrow gauge private companies) and Austrian (ÖBB) catenary systems. In addition to overhead systems the company

also manufactures pantographs.

The Spanish company Electrotren produces catenary components including composite wires of differing lengths and a choice of masts (for German or Spanish railways). Other manufacturers retailing catenary parts include JV and Ferro Suisse in HO scale and Vollmer for N gauge. Klein Modellbahn produces a small range of catenary parts based on Austrian railways practice. For Z scale Märklin manufacturer a catenary system. Hobbex retail Austrian-style equipment.

The Viessmann catenary system

Viessmann make catenary systems for both N and HO/OO gauges. In both scales they produce starter sets that can be easily extended with a wide range of individual masts, wires etc. The OO/HO starter set is stock number 4100 and is retailed in the UK by Gaugemaster at around £50. It has sufficient parts for a small oval of single



Viessmann starter set

track including 14 masts (part 4110), 12 wires (4142) and 2 longer wires (4143). Viessmann claims that its catenary system is one of the simplest on the market today. It says that it requires no soldering and one simply clips the pieces in place and starts operating. I have previously worked with the Sommerfeldt catenary system for HOm systems and so this was the first time that I've used the Viessmann system for standard gauge lines (though not prototypically Swiss). What follows by way of explanation will have elements of truth for all catenary systems. Viessmann produce lengths of wire ranging from 140mm to 400 mm. In

addition they produce a range of wires for specific track components from various European track systems.

Installing the Viessmann catenary

From past experience I suggest you give yourself a dry run with a few of the masts and wires before any holes are drilled! Play around with the bits and pieces. It will give you more confidence as you start to build the overhead system. Putting up the wires on a straight stretch of track is quite easy because the lengths of the wire can be relatively long. On curves it becomes more challenging because the masts must be positioned more frequently. Viessmann recommend that a mast should be used to every 22.5 degrees of curve. Most of the Viessmann masts arrive with a "foot" which includes small grooves across it. These grooves are intended to show the correct distance that the mast is to be "planted" away from the track. The enclosed instruction leaflet advises which groove is appropriate to which track system. The foot needs to be tight up against the track sleepers. For Hornby and Peco OO track it is suggested that the 'Fleischmann Gleis' (track) marking is used. I found that all the grooves needed to be cut off and the edge of the foot then sat next to the Gaugemaster ballast.

Once you are ready to install a mast these are the necessary steps to take:

1. Use a pencil to mark the baseboard through the hole in the foot of the mast. The foot of the mast slides off from the mast itself.
2. Drill a small hole into the baseboard that should be the correct size for the screws that are supplied with the kit.
3. Screw the foot securely onto the baseboard.
4. Slot the mast back into the foot.
5. Check that the mast is positioned at ninety degrees to the track and is positioned

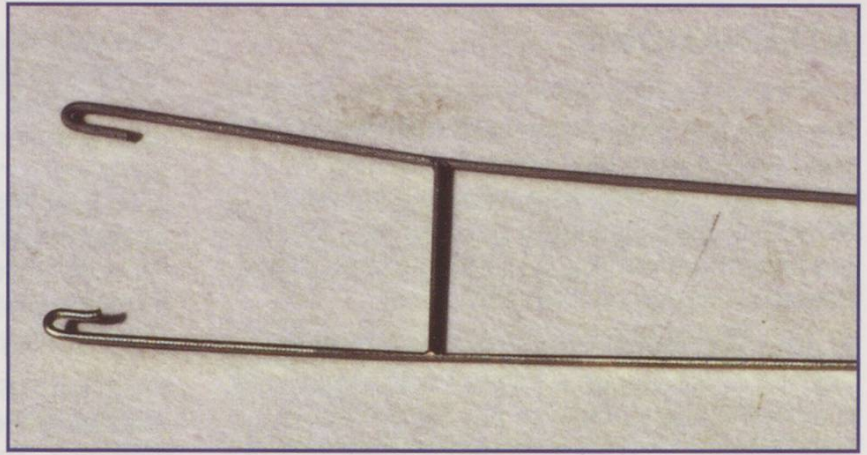


Viessmann height positioner for the wires

fixed in the correct position in relation to the pantograph of a locomotive. If the wire is too high the pantograph will not reach the wire, if it is too low the pantograph will push too much on the wire which will not make smooth operation of the trains. If the wire is too far from the centre line the

pantograph will slip off the wire – either inside or outside of the wire. Enclosed with the starter set is a blue plastic Height Positioner. I found that I did not need to use this. The pantograph was correctly positioned on the wires. Some Viessmann wires are called Universal that

Viessmann catenary on double track



Viessmann wire with bent over ends

correctly to carry the wire centrally over the track.

It is important that the wire is

indicates that the ends of the wires are not pre-bent for clipping over the catenary mast. The company retails Catenary pliers (4198) to enable the Universal catenary wires to be shortened and shaped with the required loop. The wires supplied in the set are ready bent on both wires at each end.

The masts need to be fixed to the baseboard at the correct intervals of the chosen wires. To check this distance lie the wire on the track and mark the centre point of the two bent ends of each wire just outside the ballast.

Peter continues his exercise in putting up the wires in the next Swiss Express. This article was adapted from an article published in Model Rail magazine. We thank Peter for allowing us to reproduce it.

