GWR Python A

Manufactured by: Scorpio Models, 3 Meads Close, NEWPORT, NP19 4NR.
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I rate this kit as: 2-4-3

The Python, an all purpose "Brown" Vehicle.

The kit arrives as a large flat pack with the etches taped to some stout card and a couple of bags of bits and pieces, mostly castings.

The instructions run to 7 pages, 2 of them contain a total of 32 short paragraphs of rather terse, and in places incorrect, instructions, which appear to be a poor re-hash of those for the Siphon C. 2 pages contain diagrams of the etched sheet with numbered parts. There is a good scale drawing and 2 pages of diagrams to shew how various parts work.

The first instruction says to punch out the bolt heads in the sole bars but not the centre 4 on the side marked 'A'. For this vehicle, there is no such marking, or need of it. Instruction 12 calls for wire of 45mm in length when 51mm is required. This is sloppy proof reading.

The sides and ends ready to be assembled. The diagonal hand rails at each end are not catered for so rather than drill holes, I flattened the ends of the rails and soldered them in place.

Like the Siphon C the door handles were replaced with Slater's cast brass fittings.

The window bars have neat fittings, which when lined up by fitting them in place with a long length of wire in the top set of holes; provide readymade mountings for the wire bars.

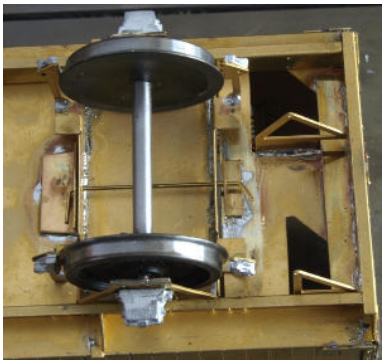
That for the door however lacks any fitting on one side and required a support to be made up to support the wires at one end.

Here are all the components ready to be assembled. In many ways, it is similar to the Siphon C kit. As can be seen, I replaced the buffers, vacuum and steam pipes and couplings. The spring hangers were missing but a 'phone call to

Scorpio resulted in a set arriving next day. Full marks for service.

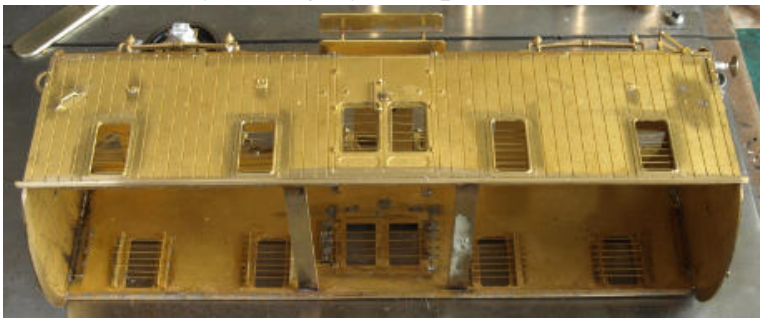
They turned out to be white metal cast from exquisite masters but far, far too frail. The J hanger on one snapped off as I lifted it to fit. I substituted a set of

cast brass long spring J hangers from CPL, which needed the springs bending flatter and the centre of the supports removed to fit but they made a robust job.

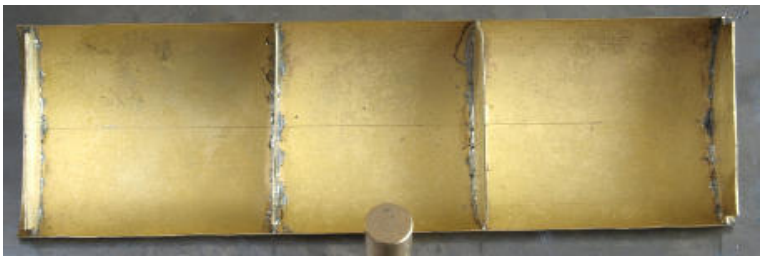


The original axle boxes were fine. However, what was not fine was the compensation unit which did not fit. The etched hole in the floor was too small and had to be opened out and one of the fold-up supports for the pivot wire had to be removed and a substitute scratched up. In this picture it can be seen that it will need to be moved again to prevent too much fore and aft movement.

Here, the body is largely complete. The footboard supports are designed to use etched parts and wire but I substituted Slater's cast brass supports instead.



To prevent the sides bowing in, two cross pieces were soldered in just under roof level. The etched part for the roof is far too wide as for this vehicle it needs to sit between the rain strips that are soldered to the top of the sides, not much point then in providing and etched part.



Also, fitting the glazing after painting would be, probably, impossible once the roof was soldered on so it needed modifying. After cutting it to the correct width, which required a great deal of careful measurement, it was rolled to shape and the edges bent over to the vertical. It is such a small turn that even the hold and fold could not cope with it so I had to use pliers, not ideal.

Four shaping pieces were cut from 1mm thick brass sheet using the ends as a master and soldered in to hold the roof to shape. Now it can be fitted, as in this picture, temporarily to check for square. It will be glued in position once painting is completed.

The pictures in Russell's book shew one vehicle with rain strips on the roof as well but that is the vehicle that was specially strengthened for carrying elephants, the remainder had neither strips nor ventilators on the roof.

Here it is ready to go to Ian's paint shop.

Aside from the poor quality of the castings, the grossly oversize roof and the poorly fitting compensation unit, the kit is well designed and makes up into a good representation of the prototype but, not for the beginner.

The manufacturers were sent this review and, though they said they wanted to respond, some three weeks later I had heard nothing.