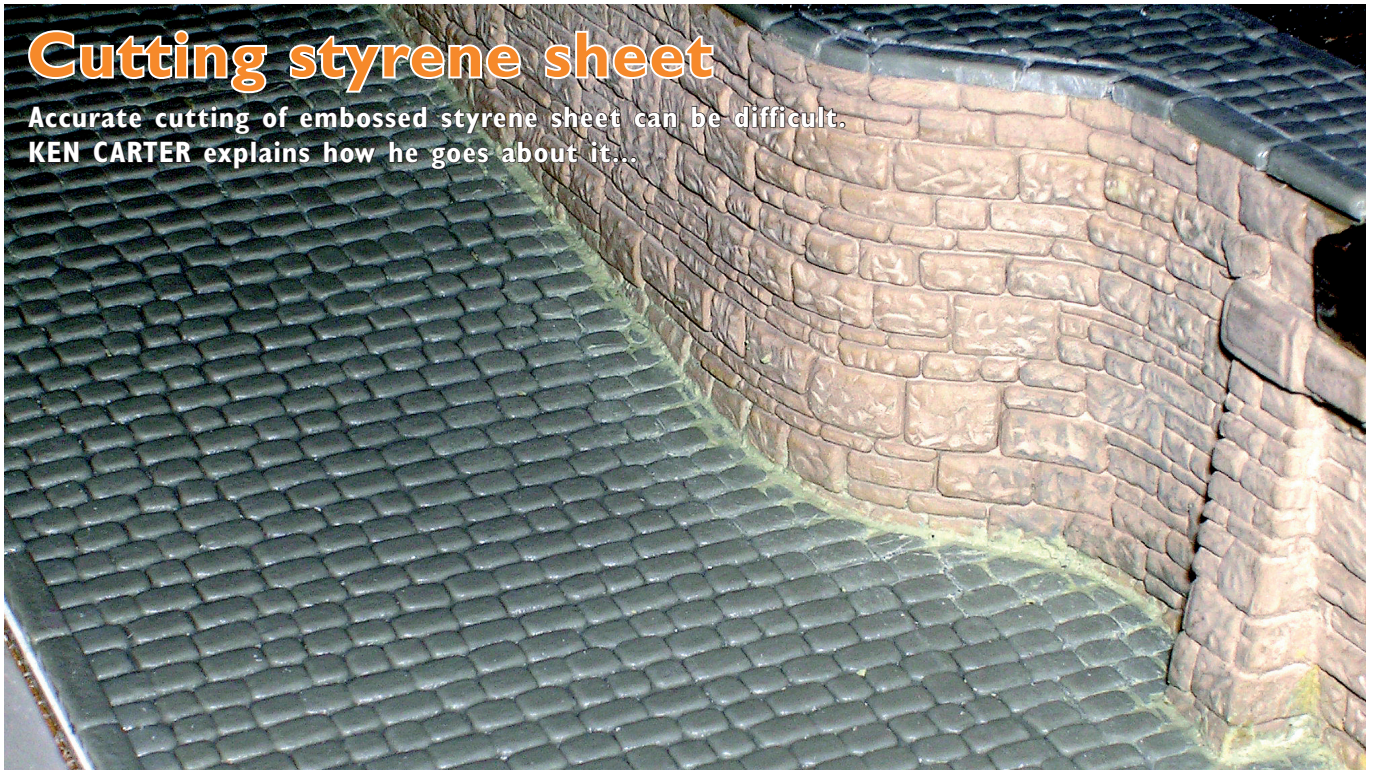


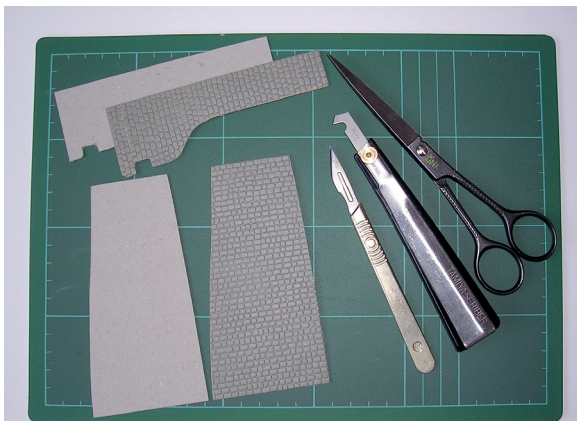
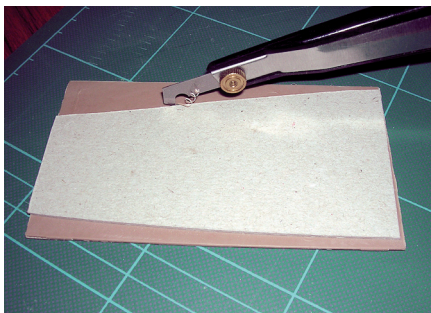
# Cutting styrene sheet

Accurate cutting of embossed styrene sheet can be difficult. KEN CARTER explains how he goes about it...



**L**IKE a lot of modellers I love the model structure sheets made by Wills. Also like a lot of modellers I often wonder why they don't come in larger sizes, and why are they so thick and difficult to cut.

My 4mm scale Holmfirth layout has a lot of stone buildings, walls and large areas of setts. It's amazing just how many acres of these small stone setts were laid in the Victorian era, nearly every goods yard had them. If you want to build a model layout based in the age of steam or even in the present day you must put in some setts.



Photography by Ken Carter

The problem for me was I had a lot of them to put down and a lot of cutting and trimming to make them fit. The easy way I thought was to lay down some plaster and scribe in some setts. But that seemed a long a job and I knew however careful I was they would never look as good as those done by Wills. Time for some blue sky thinking as my friend Graham Smith says.

For some years I have been scratch building Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway wagons and have used the Tamiya scribe made by Olfa to put in the planking. It is an excellent tool and if you haven't got one I would seek one out straightaway.

Rather than use the tool for scribing I decided to use it for cutting. But as many of you will know cutting with a knife of any sort on the surface of an embossed sheet is the quick road to disaster. The embossing diverts the tool from the straight steel ruler so easily that you either end up with a line that goes all over the place or a visit to the casualty department of your local hospital. The answer was to turn it over and cut through from the smooth surface on the back.

The beauty of using the Tamiya scribe is that you don't have to press on hard because you are not cutting, merely scribing and removing the material.

Once you have determined your line continue to scribe until you reach the embossing, you will know when you are nearly through as the scribe will snag on the embossing. At this point stop, and continue to cut using your favourite cutting tool. I use a scalpel knife

with a number 10a blade. The 'a' is important to me as this size of blade is just that bit shorter and more easily managed when cutting. Don't try to cut through with the first pass of the knife, remember pressure doesn't cut, several passes of the blade does and you will get a far neater finish. To finish off I use a broad flat file and if the edge has to carry the embossing a couple of needle files to cut it in. I use a triangular and a thin round file for this job.

That's all very well I hear you cry but how do I make sure the cuts are in the right place after all I am working from the back and I might be doing a curve? The answer is a template. Templates are so easy to make from thin card, you can easily draw on it and you can trim them to size with a pair of scissors. Checking and trimming the template to make sure everything fits is easier than directly using the Wills sheet. The only thing you must remember to do is to put them on your Wills sheet the right way round. Always check twice before cutting! As you are only scribing there is no need for thick card. If you carefully move the scribe along the edge several times it will soon give you a good line to follow.

Here are a couple of tips I have found useful. When wanting to make a corner say on a stone wall scribe as above but don't cut through all the embossing. Using your triangular file cut a 'v' shaped groove and when satisfied bend the sheet through 90°.

I use a cutting mat for all my modelling but when using the scribe I always lay a piece of card down on top of it. If you don't the scribe will take a chunk out of your mat and it will be ruined.

I hope that by using the above method it will encourage many of you who have not been happy using Wills sheets to try again. Happy Scribing.