



1 A model of the Somerset & Dorset Railway wouldn't be complete without the Fowler-designed '7F' 2-8-0s. Scratchbuilt 53801 rounds the corner to Chilcompton with a loaded coal train.

# Chilcompton

## The S&D in the 1950s

The Redditch Model Railway Club has a long history with Somerset & Dorset-based layouts, despite being located more than 100 miles from this fascinating railway. Club Secretary **GUY CRADDOCK** looks back at the creation of this 18ft long model and discusses how the club researched the prototype.

**C**hilcompton is the fourth Somerset & Dorset (S&D) based exhibition layout to be constructed by Redditch Model Railway Club. Previous S&D flavour layouts include Wincoleton and Otterly St Mary's.

Many ask why a club based over 100 miles from the area should be interested in the line. Well it is thanks to the club's president and treasurer, Mick Clements, who has been a fan of the line for well over 30 years. His enthusiasm has rubbed off on many of the club members.

The S&D harbours almost every aspect of railway operation, from the tranquil working of a quiet country branch line to the hectic activity of a busy main line, with the added complexities of single line working and difficult routing over stiff gradients with

trains requiring assistance. To the railway modeller it forms the ideal basis for a model, especially when considering a layout for exhibition.

Until Chilcompton, all of our S&D-based layouts were fictitious. This time we decided to build a prototype, but to keep the trains moving at exhibitions, it needed to be based on a double-track section. We drew up a shortlist of stations we could potentially model: Shepton Mallet, Cole, Evercreech New and Chilcompton were all potential choices.

Shepton Mallet was rejected because our self-imposed layout length would not allow us to do the station justice; Cole because we would have needed wide boards to model the goods yard; and Evercreech New as the goods yard was too small. This left us with

Chilcompton and this became our new project. The self-imposed size of the layout is forced because we use the same fiddle yard as our other two exhibition layouts: Gorcott and new club layout Dagnell End.

### Prototype research

Initially, research was confined to publications such as pictorial albums, historical literature and timetables to establish a basic knowledge of the station. Once an overall picture had been obtained, the first site visit was arranged.

The site of Chilcompton has changed dramatically since the last day of the S&D in March 1966. Much of the site is now a road haulage depot on the fringes of a modern housing estate which meant we had to turn to pre-1966 maps and photographs of the station and relate the material to what is there today.

Although the main buildings have long since gone, some foundations still exist. Once their sites were located, measurements were taken and eventually a basic plan of the station area was drawn up and a photographic record of the station was also made. This provided information for detailing during model construction. Careful consideration was given to operations at the station, especially in relation to the general track layout. It became obvious that some alterations would have to be made to recapture the character and appearance of the original, yet fit a workable layout into the limited space available. From this initial research the basis for a layout could be drawn up. A full-sized



lucky that the quality of some was such that by the use of a specialist photocopier we were able to enlarge the useful sections of the pictures. From these we produced a set of models of the buildings that we thought were there.

### Scenery

The contours of the landscape were built up using expanded foam, which has the advantage that it can be easily shaped with a knife or a file without crumbling – and it is light too.

Greenery was added using various scenic foam compounds or foliage. In order to give some depth and variety of colour to the ground cover, several layers have been added over a period of time. Trees were made both from wire or using products from the Woodland Scenics range.

Much of the scenic detail is down to one club member, Derek Collett, who by his own admission admits he had not done any scenic modelling before this project. Following a conversation and some inspiration from a demonstrator at the Kidderminster Model Railway Exhibition, Derek is producing much of the detail scenery. A speciality of his is the rosebay willow herb, which was prolific on embankments. Each plant is individually made around a bristle from a broom. Colour pieces of foam from the Green Scene range are stuck on and once dry parts are highlighted with poster paint. Each one is individually planted on the layout. We estimate there are over 300 plants on the layout.

The backscenes provoke a fair amount of comment at exhibitions, as they are three-dimensional. This gives a sense of depth without taking too much space. Many of the pictures are taken from old calendars, although there are a couple of pictures from Chilcompton to portray such things as the farm behind the station accurately. Many hours were spent finding the right perspective and building the cuttings up to form a picture.



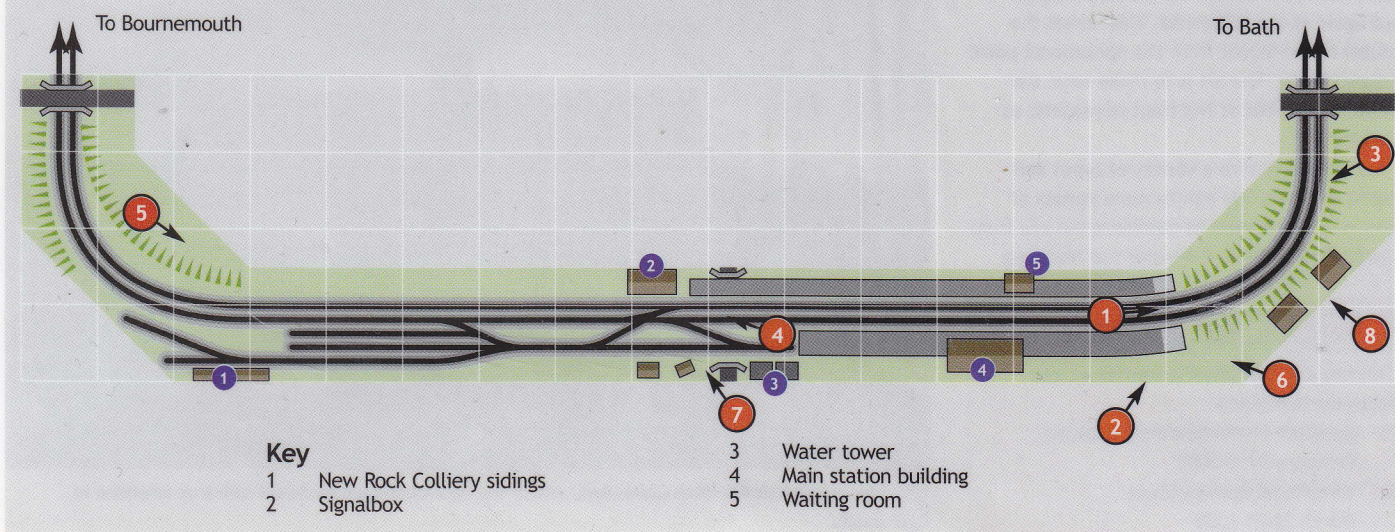
5 Although the layout is generally set between 1950 and 1955, BR's last built steam locomotive, '9F' 92220 *Evening Star*, also forms part of the exhibition fleet to haul the famous 'Pines Express'. This locomotive also had the honour of hauling the last through 'Pines' on the S&D.



6 A Midland '2P' 0-4-4T – another class with strong S&D connections – pauses at Chilcompton with a stopping service. This model has been finished with 'British Railways' lettering on its tank sides – a comparative rarity in model form.

### Chilcompton Track Diagram

Each square represents 1 square foot. (Not to scale)





## Chilcompton statistics

**Owner:** Redditch Model Railway Club  
**Builder:** Redditch Model Railway Club  
**Scale:** 'OO'  
**Track:** Peco Code 100  
**Length:** 18ft  
**Width:** 9 1/2ft  
**Period:** 1950-1955

track plan was drawn out on the back of some old wallpaper and so the process of turning an idea into a model began.

### Model changes

Even with the limited length of the fiddle yard, construction of an exact scale replica was possible for the station and goods yard area, but to allow the track to curve back round to the fiddle yard these areas of the layout are not to scale. At this stage, the track plan and baseboard design were drawn and agreed. The early design and construction work was based upon the initial research work carried out during the selection of a suitable prototype.

This information now required expanding and a programme of studies was initiated. A detailed study of the pictorial albums and historical literature was followed by a similar study of magazines and society publications, such as the Somerset & Dorset Trust journals. Of particular interest were the news and motive power reports detailing train movements and unusual motive power workings. In many cases these references were substantiated by photographic evidence from either the pictorial albums or from the collection of photographs obtained from railway exhibitions or other private collections.

These sources, combined with acquired working timetables, allowed a comprehensive picture of operations to be established. The photographs from the various sources were filed in albums and made available to individual members undertaking specific projects. A list of locomotive numbers, together with regular and unusual workings, was drawn up to form authentic train formations. Throughout the construction of the layout, research continued to reveal details and snippets of information requiring minor modifications to be made.

In February 2002, Chilcompton made its debut at Biggleswade, but within a week of the show, we had found more photographs which proved our assumptions about the area behind the goods yard building were wrong. So, by the next exhibition date two months later, the whole goods yard had been remodelled!

### Chilcompton history

Chilcompton station was 14 miles from Bath Green Park in the north and 57 miles from Bournemouth West in the south. The station, which was just to the south of Midsomer Norton, was around 600ft above sea level, which often caused problems with snow in the winter.

The village of Chilcompton had somewhere between 600 and 800 inhabitants throughout the life of the railway. Other employers in Chilcompton included the sawmills and nearby New Rock coal mine.

Chilcompton station opened on July 20 1874 on the south side of the valley of the River Somer. The railway through Chilcompton from Bath to Evercreech Junction initially opened as a single line. A passing-loop was provided in 1876. This resulted in the opening of the first signalbox at Chilcompton.

Progressively the section from Midford to Evercreech was doubled between 1886 and 1892. The doubling of the line through Chilcompton was completed around 1886. The line from Chilcompton to Binger was doubled in 1885 and from Chilcompton to Radstock in 1886. The station closed with the rest of the S&D on Saturday March 5 1966 (the last special trains actually ran the day after on Sunday March 6, but the line was closed to normal traffic after service on the Saturday).

The second signalbox, which opened in 1886, closed on April 11 1965. It was built to the standard S&D Type 2 design and was equipped with a 13 lever Stevens Pattern Frame with 4 1/8-inch centres. The signalling at the station was unusual in that no ground signals were provided when the second signalbox was built and all shunting was controlled by hand signals. The 'box had a closing switch, which meant trains could pass through the station when the 'box was closed as long as access to the goods yard was not required. During the life of the second signalbox brickwork was added to the upper storey under the windows, it is thought due to rot or other damage and it is in this condition we have modelled it.

The down yard had a goods shed, a five-ton crane and two water towers. These were used to replenish locomotives used to bank freight trains up the 1-in-50 grade from Radstock to Masbury Summit. For safety reasons freight trains were banked, but passenger trains were piloted.

In the 1930s the sidings at the station were extended to provide a loading dock so coal could be brought by road from New Rock Colliery. The colliery opened in 1819 and closed on September 28 1968. The goods yard had ceased to handle traffic by June 15 1964.

### The model

The baseboards are standard sizes. All the straight boards are 3ft x 1ft 6in constructed around plywood frames to keep the weight of each board down to a minimum. The baseboards formed are of a conventional 'solid top' construction with the tops being made of chipboard. The boards are joined together using pattern makers' dowels for alignment. The whole layout is supported on trestles, each with a chain to adjust the height. For transportation the six straight scenic boards are paired together to form a box. The two corner boards box in pairs face-to-face.

### Track and wiring

Peco Code 100 track has been used for the layout. This was laid onto a cork base. A cheap tip here is to use cork wall tiles from a DIY centre, cut to shape with a chamfer added to create what becomes the ballast shoulder.

### Further information

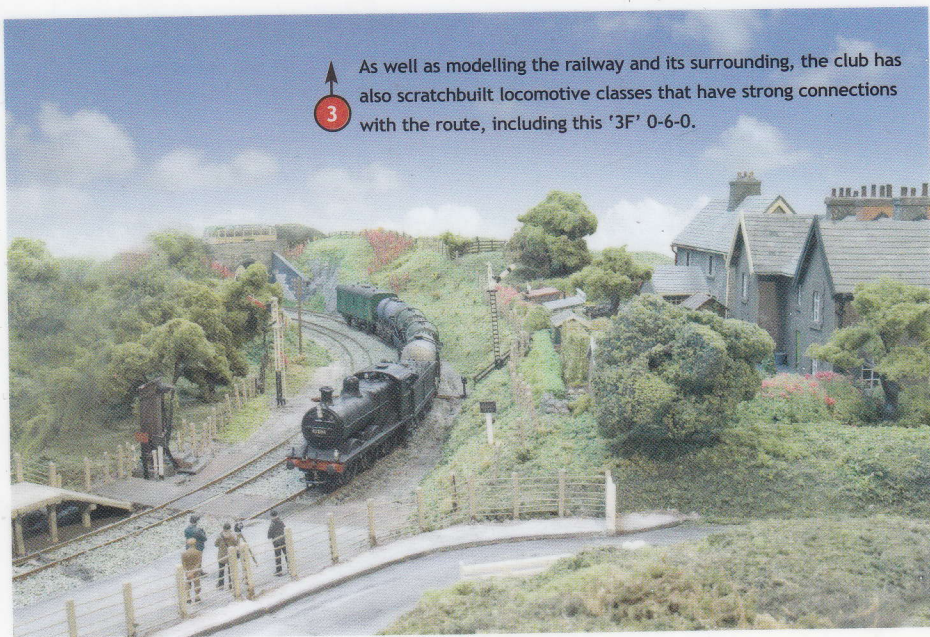
Whilst constructing our Chilcompton layout the club has found a number of sources for prototype photographs and they are all able to supply copies from their respective photograph collections.

■ R.K. Blencowe Historic Railway Photographs, 48 Cherville Street. Romsey Hampshire SO51 8FD.

■ Kidderminster Railway Museum — Photographic Collection, Station Approach, Comberton Hill, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY10 1QX.

■ Roger Carpenter — Photographic Collection, 407 Highters Heath Lane, Hollywood, Birmingham, B14 4TR.

3 As well as modelling the railway and its surrounding, the club has also scratchbuilt locomotive classes that have strong connections with the route, including this '3F' 0-6-0.





3 The Redditch Model Railway Club has gone to great lengths to get the details right, even down to the lineside flowers. In a typical S&D pairing, a '4F' 0-6-0 pilots a Bulleid air-smoothed 'Pacific' through the station.



The fiddle yard is a standard unit we have constructed with the intention of using it for a number of layouts, including Settle and Carlisle-based layout Gorcott and our new Southern Region layout, Dagnell End. The use of a common fiddle yard helps keep down costs of new layouts and it also helps to speed up production too. However it does mean that there have to be common track centres out of the ends of the fiddle yard, and it restricts the length of layout that can be constructed.

The fiddle yard can be filled with a maximum of 32 trains. Normally we run the layout with around 24 separate trains to give a variety of train lengths.

The layout is wired common return using a conventional DC system. Being a club layout we have yet to get a number of our key members who supply stock for our exhibition layouts to commit to DCC. All the section switching is done from two panels at the front, one each for the up and down lines. Each half of the fiddle yard has its own

control panel. All the points are motorised using trusty old H&M motors in the fiddle yard and Peco point motors on the scenic parts of the layout.

Actual control of the trains is via two Gaugemaster handheld controllers.

### The buildings

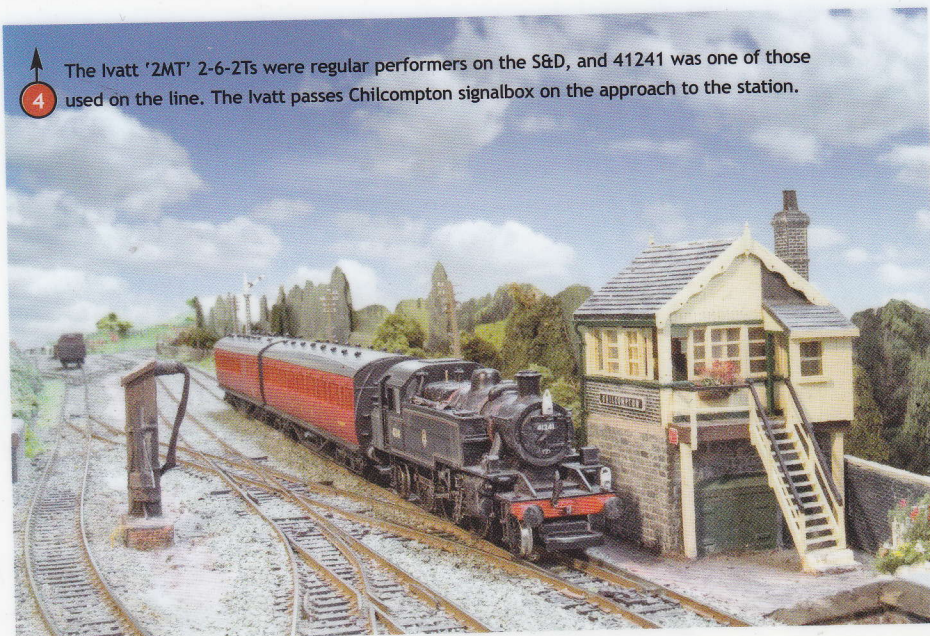
Like all of our recent exhibition layouts Chilcompton features scratch-built buildings. In building a prototype there is normally no way of avoiding this, so, as with previous layouts, all the buildings are based around card carcasses.

The main station building is actually based on scale drawings we had for Midsomer Norton, as the building is very similar. By using the drawings and contemporary photographs of the actual building we were able to produce the model. Chilcompton signalbox was scratchbuilt from drawings in an issue of the *SDJR Trust Journal*.

The signalbox is a standard design for the line: part-wood, part-stone and brick. This building was also created around a card shell, but the timbers were either scored on or made from balsa wood and the stone and walkway is plasticard.

All the building roofs were made from strips of thin paper. This was then suitably coloured and scored to represent roof slates. When it came to making the buildings in the goods yard there were no drawing available so we resorted to the photographs. We were

4 The Ivatt '2MT' 2-6-2Ts were regular performers on the S&D, and 41241 was one of those used on the line. The Ivatt passes Chilcompton signalbox on the approach to the station.





7 It's a sight I'm sure many would love to see again on the S&D — two '7Fs' passing on heavy goods trains! A north bound coal train passes a southbound mixed goods as they thunder through the station.



A recent feature on the layout is the addition of stone walls around the two cottages at the 'Bath' end of the layout. After some thought and experimentation we hit upon the idea of using cork tiles. These were broken up into small random 'stones' of a suitable size and then individually horizontally laid to make up the wall. The tops were made from more suitably shaped tile pieces — this time laid vertically. Once assembly was finished the whole wall was spray painted with grey car undercoat paint. This provided a base to which the weathering colours were added to produce what we think are very realistic walls.

#### Operation and presentation

Having a continuous circuit of track, it is obvious trains that leave the fiddle yard and travel round the layout will enter the fiddle yard again at the other end. This makes the running of the layout from the operational point of view simple. The art is to make what the spectators see out at the front as realistic as possible.

To do this we have a variety of types and lengths of trains. We aim to run a variety of trains on Chilcompton to represent the era from around 1950 to 1955. Extensive use has been

made of ready-to-run models — suitably weathered and detailed — to represent prototypes that once ran on the line. There are a number of locomotives including the purpose-built Fowler '7F' 2-8-0s and '3F' 0-6-0 tender locomotives which have been scratchbuilt, although all run on adapted ready-to-run chassis.

Our modelling does not stop with the locomotives, as the rolling stock used is all prototypically modelled. Many of the coaches have Comet brass or scratchbuilt sides to represent the more unusual types that were

seen on the S&D. The goods stock is a mixture of ready-to-run with an increasing number of kit-built items.

The building of Chilcompton gave our members a new challenge, as it is the first S&D layout built by the club based on a real location. The 'field' trips to Chilcompton were a great experience and the information we gathered has been developed into a detailed model of the station, goods yard and surrounding buildings. It has been a great journey for the club and one that I'm sure we will follow again for a future project. [View](#)



7 The cottages at the 'Bath Green Park' end of the layout has been modelled with true attention to detail.

#### Chilcompton's exhibition dates

The Redditch Model Railway Club's model of Chilcompton is booked to appear at the following exhibitions:

- Redditch Model Railway Exhibition  
February 9/10 2008
- York Model Railway Show  
March 22-24 2008