

Oakenshaw

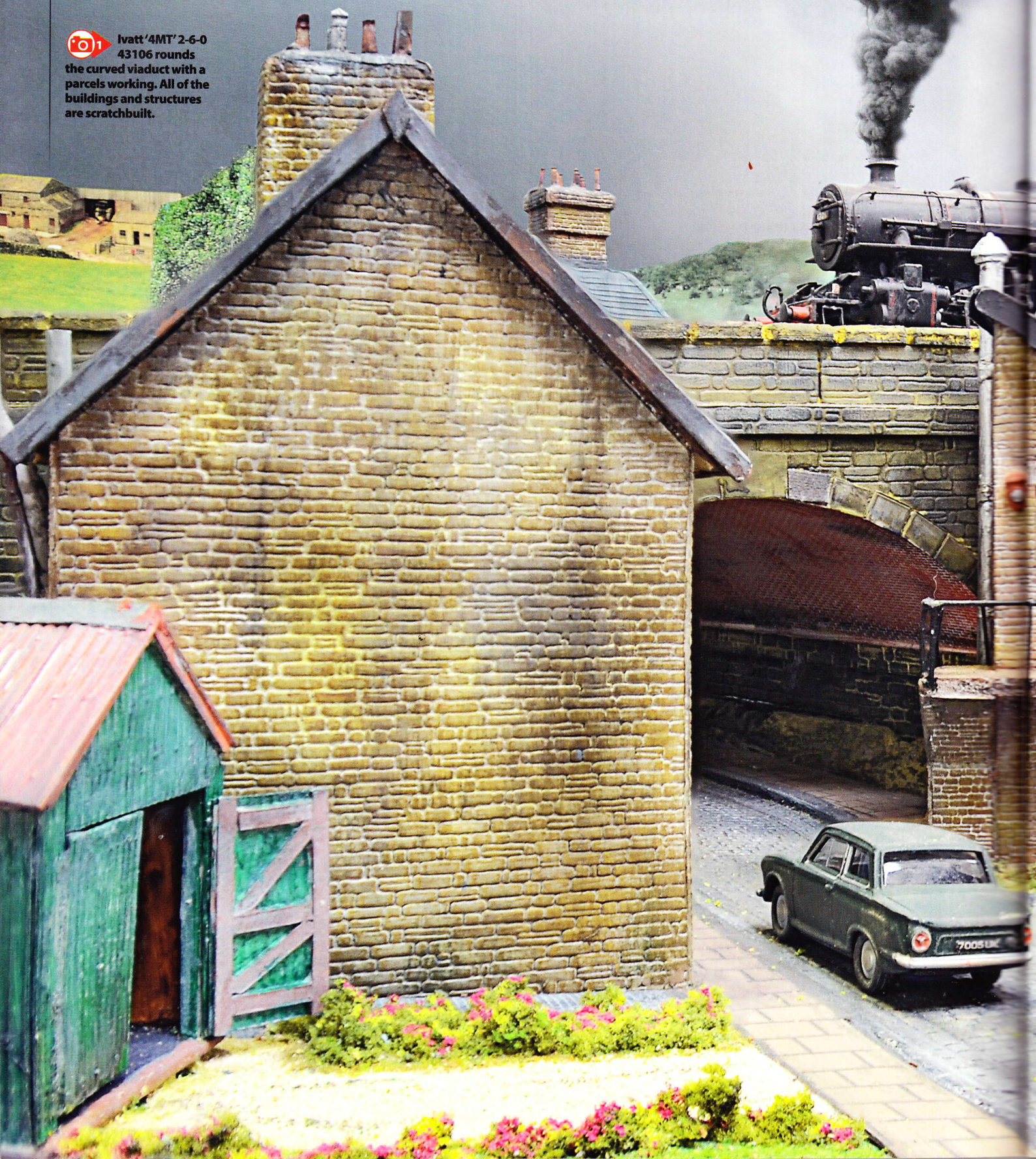
Redditch Model Railway Club looked to West Yorkshire in the 1950s for its latest exhibition layout drawing inspiration from across the region.

PHOTOGRAPHY, TREVOR JONES



Ivatt '4MT' 2-6-0
43106 rounds

the curved viaduct with a
parcels working. All of the
buildings and structures
are scratchbuilt.



OAKENSHAW is based on the Aire Valley line close to Keighley. The era is the late-1950s and early-1960s just after these former Midland Railway lines in the area had moved into the short-lived North Eastern Region of British Railways. This meant the railway colours became blue and white and the station signs had orange backgrounds. This creates a slightly different setting for a former Midland Railway station and very much typifies the end of steam era on British Railways.

This layout started life as a stop-gap project while the Redditch Model Railway Club was working on a much larger, longer term model. "Back in 2010 we had just more or less finished our latest project Dagnell End and we were starting to plan the next big club project," Club

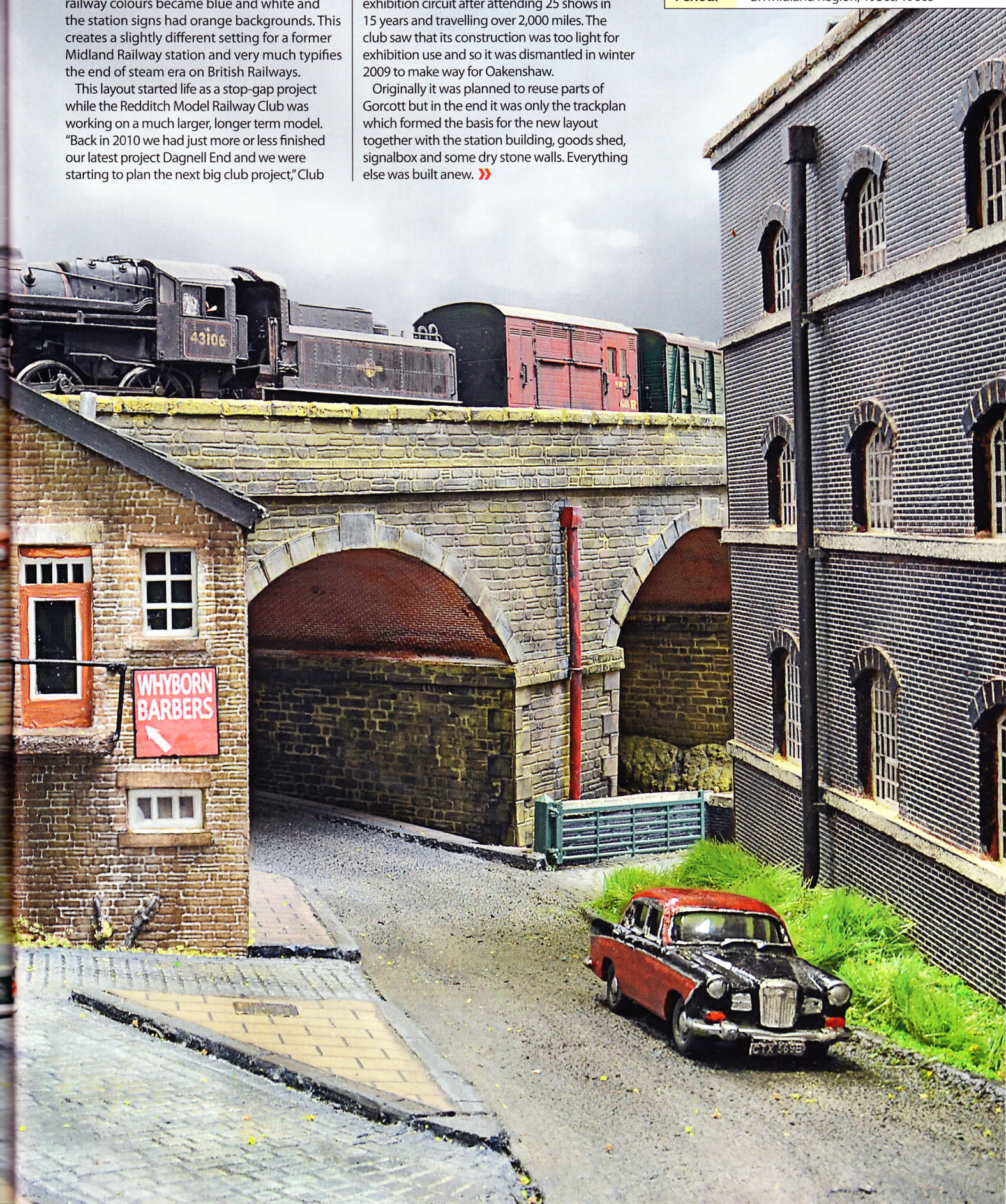
Secretary Guy Craddock says: "We needed a quick project to keep members occupied whilst we finished the research into the new one."

The Redditch club is well known for its popular exhibition layouts including Dagnell End set on the Southern Region, Arrowmouth on the Midland and its Settle and Carlisle-based Gorcott. The latter had come to the end of its life on the exhibition circuit after attending 25 shows in 15 years and travelling over 2,000 miles. The club saw that its construction was too light for exhibition use and so it was dismantled in winter 2009 to make way for Oakenshaw.

Originally it was planned to reuse parts of Gorcott but in the end it was only the trackplan which formed the basis for the new layout together with the station building, goods shed, signalbox and some dry stone walls. Everything else was built anew. »

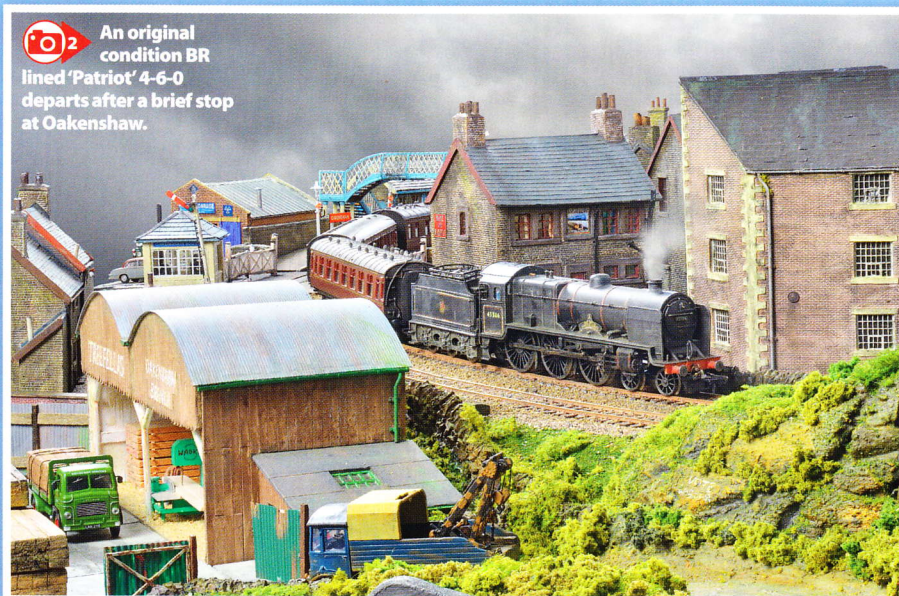
STATISTICS

Owner:	Redditch MRC
Scale:	'OO'
Length:	18ft
Width:	10ft
Track:	Peco code 75
Control:	Analogue
Period:	BR Midland Region, 1950s/1960s





An original condition BR lined 'Patriot' 4-6-0 departs after a brief stop at Oakenshaw.



New setting

The setting for Oakenshaw is quite different to that of Gorcott. Guy takes up the story: "We have surrounded the railway with a typical mill town of stone buildings. Ideas for the buildings have been drawn from a wide area of Yorkshire with prototypes from places such as Holmfirth, Keighley, Shipley and Wakefield.

"Inspiration for the layout came from a weekend we spent in Holmfirth exhibiting Arrowmouth in October 2009 at the model railway show there. The opportunity was taken to photograph a number of suitable buildings which have provided ideas for the layout. A similar process took place when we exhibited Dagnell End at the Wakefield show in November 2009 where we found a suitable chapel to model for the layout."

Construction of Oakenshaw was spurred by an invite to exhibit the layout at the Warley National Model Railway Exhibition in November 2014 which gave just four years for the new layout to be built.



The timber yard is busy as Stanier '8F' 2-8-0 48374 passes with a block oil train of new 45ton TTA tankers.



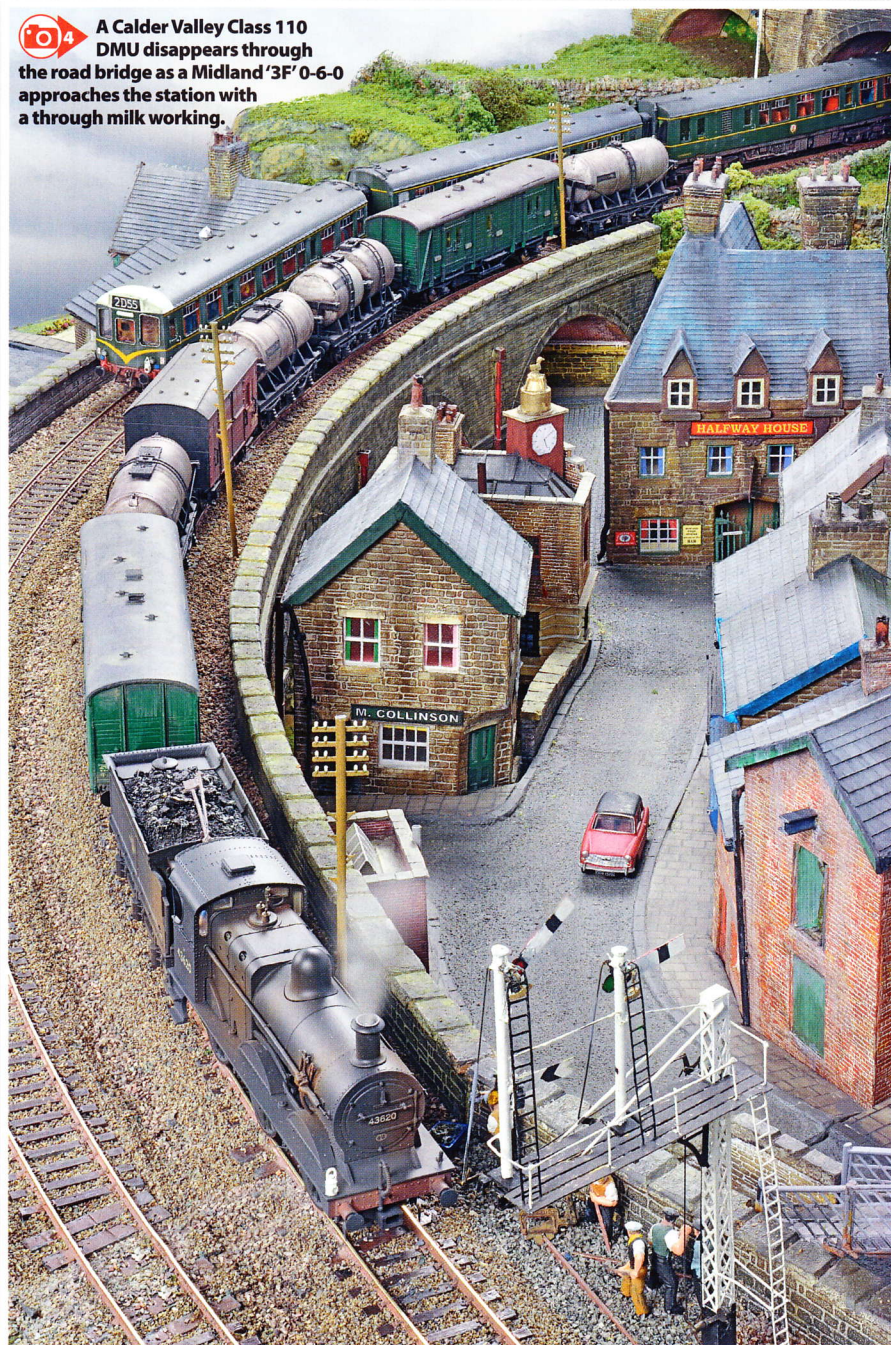
Every building on the layout is scratchbuilt. The smaller buildings are based around a thick card structure covered in various plasticards. Virtually all of the windows come from Dornaplas or Brassmasters, the latter designed for use with the Scalescenes card kits. "We have found the shop fronts and factory windows particularly good - plus there are a few bits from the Langley range, though we tend to use more of their white metal fittings," says Guy.

The larger buildings have MDF as the bases and pieces of balsa as strengtheners. "The art of scratchbuilding is very much getting the base structure right and then finishing them off with details such as weathering and drainpipes," Guy explains.

At both ends of the layout bridges play an important part in setting the scene. The biggest is the five-arch viaduct over the town. This has a chipboard track base with the remainder of the structure being constructed using a plasticard from a temporary shop sign. The bridge that



A Calder Valley Class 110 DMU disappears through the road bridge as a Midland '3F' 0-6-0 approaches the station with a through milk working.



provides the scenic break is made of this plastic too and, again, like the rest of the other buildings, they are covered in embossed plasticard for the final stone finish.

Scenery

Whilst much of the layout is covered in either buildings or the railway there is greenery on Oakenshaw. The scenery is supported on expanded polystyrene covered with plaster bandage with additional Polyfilla. When this dried the ground was painted using green and brown poster paint before ground cover was built up using scenic foliage added in multiple layers.

Guy takes over to reveal the club's approach: "Something that has become a signature feature on our layouts is that of Rose Bay Willow Herb, which was very prolific on railway embankments. Each plant is individually made around a bristle from a broom. Coloured pieces of foam from the Green Scene range are stuck on and once dry parts are highlighted with poster paint and each one is individually 'planted' on the layout."


Water was another important feature to the

layout. "We have experimented with a number of different methods of creating water features on our layouts. On Oakenshaw we required a number of sections of canal and a small stream. This time we used the Woodlands Scenics Water in a Bottle, which is basically a resin that you pour into the area you want the water and leave it overnight to set. It took a bit of experimenting," Guy admits. "The base was created and painted with suitable acrylic colours and the water is poured. Of course, you have to ensure the whole area is sealed, otherwise - as with our first attempt - some of the water escapes and ends up in a pool on the floor!"

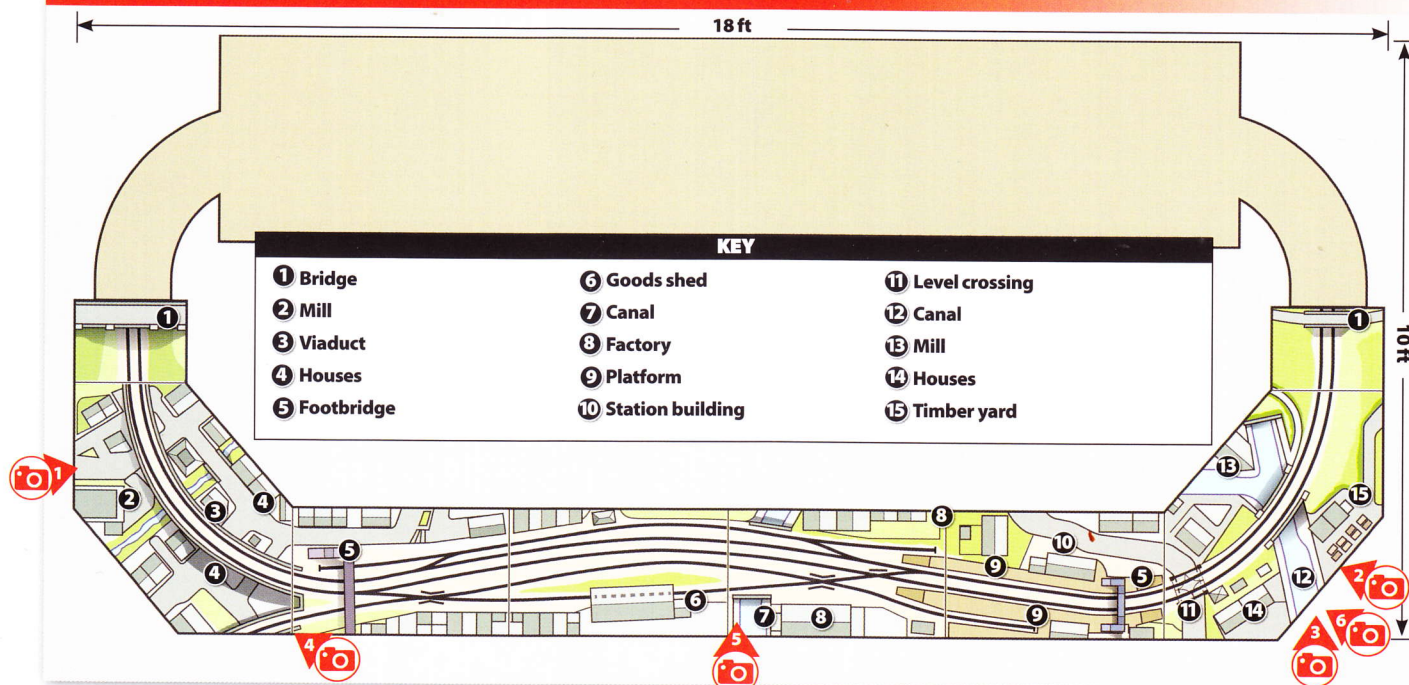
The trains

Another key to the appeal of Oakenshaw is the correctly formed and weathered trains for the era portrayed. This does not mean detailed locomotives pulling ready-to-run stock - a huge amount of effort has been made to ensure that every item of stock, whether a brake van, parcels vans, box van or carriage has a similar style to its appearance including weathering. Equally, trains »



 Fowley 4F
0-6-0 44146
crosses the canal as
it passes through
Oakenshaw.

OAKENSHAW TRACK DIAGRAM (Not to scale)



have been formed correctly for the period using prototype images for inspiration.

"As with all of our club exhibition layouts all of the locomotives and trains are owned by the members," Guy clarifies. "We have found this encourages members to want to provide stock for exhibition layouts and develop their own collections. All the locomotives and rolling stock used on the layout are a mixture of ready-to-run and kit-built items, all suitably detailed and weathered to portray the era and location of the layout."

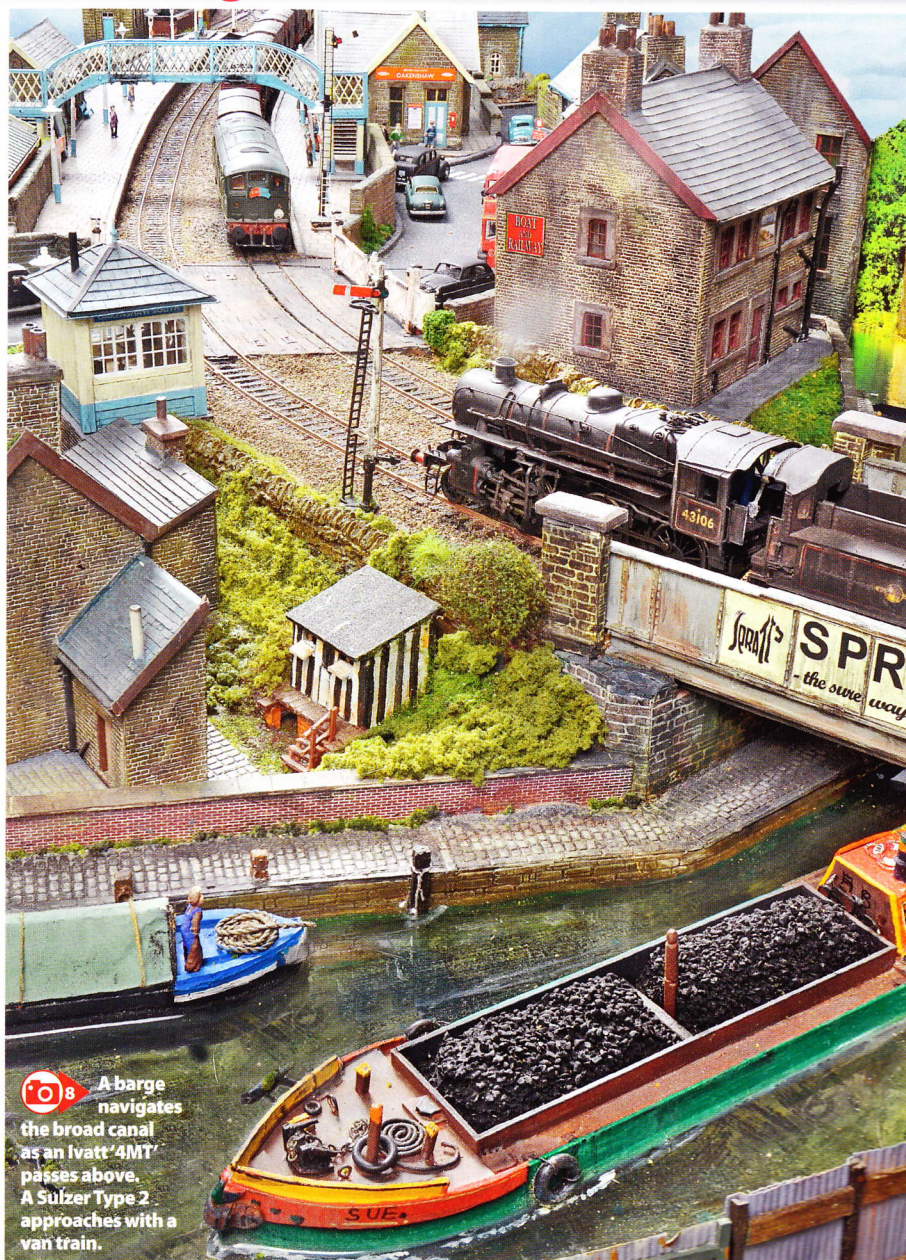
Being a Midland Region layout the locomotive fleet is drawn from the former London Midland & Scottish Railway roster with passenger traffic handled by the likes of 'Patriot', 'Royal Scot' and 'Jubilee' 4-6-0s working alongside Fowler and Stanier 2-6-4Ts. 'Pacifics' are used sparingly on Oakenshaw as these were more common on major routes such as the West Coast Main Line, but it does have a couple of BR Standard 'Pacifics' on the roster including a 'Clan' 4-6-2.

On the freight side there is a wide variety of motive spanning from Midland Railway designs right through to 'modern' – for the 1950s at least – BR 'Standard' freight locomotives. These include Midland '3F' and '4F' 0-6-0s, Ivatt '4MT' 2-6-0s, '8F' and 'WD' 2-8-0s and the essential BR '9F' 2-10-0s. A small number of diesels are also on the fleet for Oakenshaw including a Class 24 and 45 together with a Class 110 'Calder Valley' three-car Diesel Multiple Unit.

More to come...

It looks a remarkably complete layout, but Guy differs: "Whilst Oakenshaw is complete we plan to continue to add detail to the layout. We also need to continue to perfect the layout's operation. Not wanting to lose the momentum, we have already started on our next project which is something totally different. The new layout is called Smallwood and is a 1970s set end-to-end layout to be followed by the big West Midlands prototype layout, to be set in the same period."

With all this and more to come the Redditch Model Railway Club will be a busy place now and in the future. ■



8 A barge navigates the broad canal as an Ivatt '4MT' passes above. A Sulzer Type 2 approaches with a van train.