



# Railway of the month

**Guy Craddock**

## **GORCOTT**

The Settle & Carlisle in the 1960s

*Redditch MRC celebrates its 30th Anniversary this year: this account of their impressive exhibition layout in OO is by the RMRC Chairman.*

It is Thursday 1st June 1967 and a blue Bentley car draws up onto the forecourt of Gorcott railway station in Yorkshire, on the Settle to Carlisle (S&C) line. It is driven by the famous, but now late, Ivo Peters. He is best known for his photographs of his beloved Somerset & Dorset Railway. However he spent many hours recording the changing railway scene all over the country, using both stills and 16mm movie film. This is one of his last visits to this area of the country, because regular steam will end over the Settle & Carlisle line after the summer of 1967. He has made many trips hereabouts since 1965.

Gorcott, like so many of the stations on the S&C, is miles from any substantial centres of population and so in the summer the tranquillity is only broken by the passing trains. The station is situated five miles north of Settle and is close to the village of Stainforth. The line was built at the end of the last century by the Midland Railway as their way to Scotland. This was so they did not have to continue to rely on running over the rival

London & North Western Railway metals.

Much of the freight services are still in the hands of steam locomotives, mainly Black 5s, 8Fs and the Standard 9Fs. The trains show great variety. Passenger services are now virtually all in the hands of diesels, heralding the new era. Even the liveries of the coaches and diesels are mixed as the steam era colours give way to the new corporate blue times of the 1970s and early '80s. Some of the summer relief trains are still however in the hands of steam engines, these being well turned-out Leeds Holbeck-based "Jubilee" class locomotives. Unfortunately the likes of *Kolhapur* and *Alberta* have only months to go. In just over twelve months' time much of the variety will have gone, leaving the railways to the new blue livery era of British Rail and its diesel and electric traction. Ivo spends most of the day at the station recording the day's activities and does not leave until early evening.

Some 130 miles away as the crow flies, at the town of Redditch in Worcestershire, a

group of model railway enthusiasts is gathering that evening. The outcome of this meeting was the formation of the Redditch Model Railway Club. Was there a connection between these events? Well, maybe.

### **The model**

The layout was conceived for display at model railway exhibitions. From the start it was designed to entertain the visitors with a variety of constantly moving trains. The layout is built to 4mm scale and occupies an area of 18' x 6'. The design makes it suitable for both one or two-day shows. It can be easily transported without having to resort to hiring expensive vans. As with all the recent layouts we have created, it is a package of not just the railway but also correctly formed trains for the era portrayed. This does not mean detailed locomotives pulling out-of-the-box, ready-to-run stock. It seems strange that so many modellers spend hours constructing prize locomotives with little regard for the stock they then pull around their layouts.



onto clear acetate. These were then stuck on the inside of the window openings. The ornate windows are thereby created. Some of the wider glazing bars, eg on the station building, were then suitably coloured in using a bow pen.

The signal box is a standard Midland Railway one of wooden construction. This was also created around a card shell but the timbers were either scored on or made from balsa wood. The roofs of all the buildings were made from strips of thin paper. This was then suitably coloured and scored to represent roof slates.

The bridge over the River Arrow is similar to the one at Helwith Bridge, which is close by. The model is constructed around a chipboard base. The walls are again made from the stone plasticard, stiff card being used to form the inside of the arches. The railings around the top of the parapets on each side are made from thin plastic girder strip for the uprights and plastic rod to represent the railings. The capping stones on the walls each side are made from modelling clay which has been suitably scribed. The whole structure has again been painted and suitably weathered.

**Opposite page, top: grimy Fowler 2-6-4T No.42359 stands at Gorcott station with a local service.**

**Opposite page, bottom: the typically Midland goods shed, complete with lozenge-shaped window panes.**

**Above: Standard Class 4 4-6-0 No.75019 is checked by a signal.**

**Right: Gorcott station building. Photographs by M.J.Clements.**

### Scenery

The track once tested was weathered, with the rail sides being painted a rust colour. The trackbed was then ballasted using a 2mm scale product. The whole track formation was then suitably toned down.

The contours of the landscape were built up using a type of expanded foam that architects use to sculpture miniature models. The foam has the advantage of being easily shaped with a knife or a filer without crumbling. Once painted it then forms a very solid base. Rock faces can be effectively formed by carving into the foam. The foam also has the advantage of being very light. The greenery was added using various scenic foam compounds or foliage. To give the ground cover some depth and variety of colour sev-

eral layers have been added over a period of time.

Various dried mosses have also been used. These are glued with PVA and then sprayed with a cheap hair spray to help preserve them.

Trees were made both from wire or real twigs to form the trunks and then modelling compounds were added to produce the foliage. There are also a number of trees made around the plastic kits produced by Britains.

The water features on the layout presented us with unforeseen problems. We were given two packs of a product called E-Z Water, produced by Woodland Scenics. In theory it produces water features without the hassle of the more usual but time-consuming method of





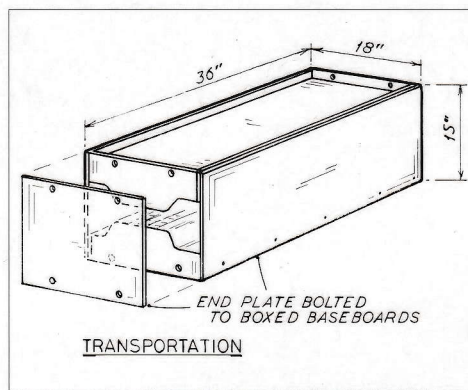
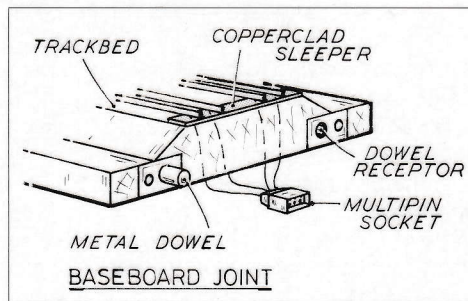
### The foundation

The baseboards are standard sizes, all the straight boards being 36" x 18" and constructed round plywood frames. We have previously used the more normal method of 2" x 1" timber frames. We were keen to keep weight down so we have experimented with plywood.

We paid a visit to the local timber merchant: after we convinced them we were serious they cut up an 8' x 4' sheet of Red Meranti plywood into suitably sized strips. We had around sixty pieces 36" long x 2" wide. A further advantage with this method was the cost saving over the use of normal wood. With careful bracing and the use of a jigs for construction, we have ended up with very stable boards.

The club was lucky to have two members who in the best traditions of model railway clubs "volunteered" to make up the base frames. Both of them work for a car manufacturer and are used to assembly-line working. This speeded construction up considerably.

The baseboards formed are of a conventional "solid top" construction. The tops are



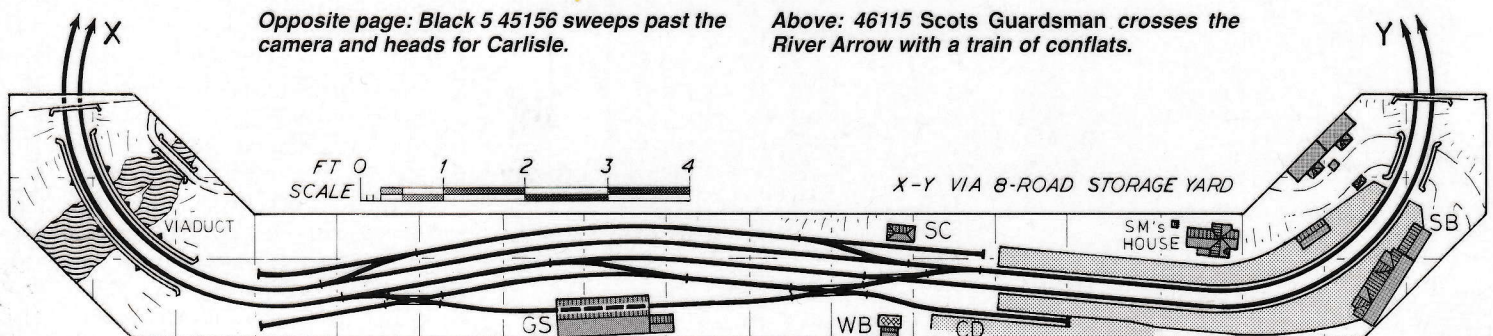
made from fibre board, to keep weight down. A sub-base was then added, this time made of chipboard, supported 2 1/2" above the solid top. This sub-base acts as part of the strength in the finished board and also carries the trackwork.

The boards are joined together using pattern makers' dowels for alignment. These are similar to the method the EM Gauge Society uses except that they are incorporated in a metal rectangular plate. The plates also incorporate a hole for a bolt as well as the dowel. There are two of these in the ends of each board. The dowels allow the layout to be assembled quickly at shows with the track being correctly aligned every time. The arrangement is shown in the diagram (above left).

The whole layout is supported on trestles, each with chain to adjust the height. For transportation the scenic boards are paired together to form boxes, as shown in the diagram (left), whereas all four fiddle yard boards box as one unit. This is achieved by the removal of the backscenes from two of the boards.

Opposite page: Black 5 45156 sweeps past the camera and heads for Carlisle.

Above: 46115 Scots Guardsman crosses the River Arrow with a train of conflat.



adding layer upon layer of varnish. Not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth we decided to use it to create the required section of the River Arrow.

The river flows under the viaduct at the one end of the layout. The river bed was prepared using Mod-Roc and Polyfilla™. We had to produce a base which was sealed from the surroundings before the water could be added. The area was painted in suitable base colours using acrylic paints. Small rocks and stones were also added at this stage.

Following the instructions on the packet, the round pellets have to be heated to produce a runny liquid. This is done by cooking them in an oven. We duly took the baseboard which required the river to Mick, our Treasurer's, house. When his wife was out we cooked the water in their oven. When we attempted to pour the liquid it would not flow so we had to keep reheating it, trying not to burn it. Needless to say we ended up with "water" in the base of the oven. Mick was cleaning the oven for a week. We dare not let his wife have back the pan we used! A hot air gun was used to make the water flow and produce the ripples in the surface. However care had to be taken not to melt the surrounding scenery.

A feature on the layout we are often asked about are the stone walls. They are very much part of the scenery in this part of the world; it was therefore important to portray them effectively and as realistically as possible. There are several commercially-produced wall sections on the market, but when about 20' of them is required it would work out rather expensive. We therefore had to find some way of making them.

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 laid horizontally to make up the wall. The tops were made from more suitably shaped tile pieces, laid vertically this time. Once assembly was finished the whole wall was sprayed



with grey-coloured car undercoat paint. This provided a base colour to which the weathering shades were added, to produce what we think are very realistic walls. All in all the walls took around 150 man-hours to construct.

The backscenes also provoke a fair amount of comment at exhibitions as they are three-dimensional. This gives a very effective sense of depth without taking too much space. The pictures are from calendars. Many hours were spent finding the right perspective and building them up to form a picture. The pictures are mounted on card. The effect is created by using two or three layers of

these pictures, with card spacers between. Once these are made up some careful painting of some pictures is done using poster paints to remove modern-looking items such as cars etc. Before installation the whole unit is matt-varnished to remove the shine. It also means that it does not reflect flash when photographed.

The signals have been constructed from Ratio kits, to suit their locations. All have been suitably weathered. The signals do not work at the moment: the arms can move with a little human help, though we are investigating ways of making them fully operational.

Recent additions are dummy point rodding from the Model Signal Engineering range and signal wires. We have represented the actual rodding using thin but stiff wire which has meant the whole arrangement could be soldered together.

### Operation and presentation

Having a continuous circuit of track on the layout, it is quite obvious that 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 operators' point of view very simple.

The art is to make what the spectators see out at the front appear as realistic as possible. To do this we have a variety of types and lengths of trains, designed to represent the era of the mid-1960s. Extensive use has been made of ready-to-run models of both steam and diesel locomotives. However all have, at the very least, been detailed and weathered. Many have been considerably adapted to represent other prototypical engines. A number of the diesels have been scratchbuilt from plasticard.





### Trackwork and wiring

With previous layouts the tracklaying has unfortunately not been one of the club's strong points. This was mainly because of a desire to get this stage out of the way and move onto other more interesting parts of construction.

This time we decided to take our time. We used the then recently introduced Peco code 75 track. This was laid onto a cork base using double-sided tape. A cheap tip here is to use cork wall tiles from a DIY centre rather than the products sold through model railway shops. We have used code 100 track in the fiddle yard which was salvaged from previous layouts. The fiddle yard is made up of eight loop lines, four in each direction. The sleepers on the track immediately each side

of all the baseboard joints have been replaced with copper clad ones. The rail has then been soldered to the copper clad sleeper for added strength.

An advantage of the Peco code 75 track over code 100 is as well as looking more realistic there is a single slip in the range. This has helped to produce a more prototypical track formation. On the S&C stations, like so many Midland Railway lines, access to goods yards had to be by reversing the train rather than installing facing double slips. This saved the expense of facing point locks when the signalling was being installed.

All the buffer stops are from the Mike's Models range. These are substantial white metal units. All three stops are of a different design.

The layout is wired for cab control on the common return system. All the section switching is done from one of two control panels, one in the fiddle yard and the other for the station area. All the points are motorised using the trusty old H&M motors. To improve their reliability and to ensure a positive action, they are run via a capacitor discharge unit at around 30 volts. There is certainly a positive thump when the points change. Actual control of the trains is via two Gaugemaster hand-held controllers of the feedback variety. We have found these offer an advantage at exhibitions as operators are able to chat to spectators at any point along the layout whilst still keeping the trains moving. After all it is important to remember this is what the visitors have come to see!



### Buildings

With other previous recent layouts we have set a precedent of scratchbuilding all the layout structures. Reference for all the architecture on the layout came from *Rails in the Fells*, published by Peco. This book has plans of all the standard building types on the S&C line.

All the buildings are correctly modelled. They are the Station Building, Waiting Room, Railway Cottages, Station Master's House, Signal Box and the Goods Shed. All share the same basic structure of stiff card. All but the signal box are covered in stone plastic sheet from the Slaters range. All are then carefully painted and weathered to portray the area.

The windows of especially the Goods Shed and the Station Building presented a problem. This is because each window opening is made up of lots of small panes of glass and numerous glazing bars. The answer was to photocopy the 4mm scale window designs



Our modelling does not stop with the locomotives as the rolling stock used is prototypically modelled. Many of the coaches have scratchbuilt sides to represent the more unusual types. The wagon stock is a mixture of ready-to-run with an ever-increasing number of kitbuilt items. As with the locomotives all the rolling stock has also been weathered.

### The reality

Well, by now you may have started thumbing through your railway atlas. You will obviously find the Settle to Carlisle line. The village of Stainforth does exist as does Helwith Bridge but the River Ribble flows under it and not the Arrow.

Gorcott and the River Arrow do exist, though they are nowhere near Settle. Gorcott is a small hamlet on the A435 just north of Redditch and the River Arrow flows through the town. It has been tradition for club layouts to take names from in and around Redditch.

Back in 1967 Ivo Peters did photograph the line but we doubt he found Gorcott! As for the meeting on the 1st June 1967, if that had not taken place you would not be reading this. All that remains to be said is we hope you will join us at a future exhibition and indulge in a bit of train spotting!

**Gorcott is scheduled to appear at the Redditch MRC's 30th Anniversary Exhibition this month. See 'Societies & Clubs' for details.**

*Opposite page: the station master's house and the railway cottages. Note the photographic backscene behind the former.*

*This page: a 9F hauls freight through the station; a Black 5 and a 9F pass the signal box; a Bedford OB grinds through the village.*

