

the MRE, which we had taken in from 1988 onwards, descriptions of various model railways, I had never actually seen one in operation. So I had only the vaguest idea of how to set about planning my layout.

I had a site available. There was an outhouse in the Rectory garden which had two rooms, one of which, wired for electric light, I already used as a carpenter's shop. The other was a junk room. I measured the junk room and made a scale plan. I started with definite principles in mind. I did not want a continuous run, as I did not then think that such a layout could be worked realistically. I wanted a Terminal station, capable of handling main-line trains, and which for further interest should be a port. Neighbouring industries must provide an economic reason for the line's existence, and by siting some of these on a branch line, adequate reason would be shown for introducing a junction station, thus giving further operational interest.

At last, after filling several large size wastepaper baskets with plans which did not pass muster with my friend, the station master at neighbouring St Ives, Hunts, I produced a plan which pleased me and which he passed as railway like and operational. The plans shown here (I, the Pencil drawing by Mr P.R. Wickham) gives the parts only which were actually completed. Plan II shows how I aimed to do the trackwork etc in five stages i.e. five years (and each year was to have its quota of rolling stock and scenery too), in such a way that as each stage was finished it would give me a layout which could be run in a reasonably realistic manner. I may say that even so, my planning was much too ambitious, and at the end of the 3rd year I was about nine months behind schedule. We had to move house in January 1953, and the whole line had to be ripped up and packed in 3 days *before* *the* *move*.

The line was free-lance, in the sense that it was a model of no known railway, and the initials of the railway company N.W.R. originally stood for the "No Where Railway". But as more books were called for and produced; sharp-eyed small boys and girls kept pouncing on discrepancies in the artist's illustrations, and so I had, in self defence, to provide a location for the stories, map it, and send it to the artist as a background for his scenery. *See Sketch map over leaf*

Thus it was that the Island of Sodor was discovered and mapped and my brother and I evolved what we felt to be a convincing history of the inception and growth of the railway system in the island. This history led on to other "discoveries" in the Island's Archives, helping us to piece together something of the history of the island. Mr Edmund Ward, my publisher entered helpfully into this research and in 1951 commissioned Mr P.R. Wickham to make a large scale relief

map of the island. This map **now** hangs on the wall of my study, **to the** great **exhilaration** of visitors, **but is**, as it has been of very great help **not only** in the modelling of the region, **but** also to the writing of the stories and the planning of the illustrations. A map of the island has been drawn for this article.

As the line which started life as the **No Where** Railway ~~the~~ the North Western Region of it, and it **was** under the **capable direction** of Sir Topham Hatt, **formerly** Managing Director, and now Chairman of the Regional **Executive**.

Among the locomotive shed are Thomas, Edward, Henry, James, Percy, Gordon and Toby, **and, as told, ^{they} figure** in the stories. The model was **begun realized**; before all this was thought of. It began in a small way as a light railway between a small port (Tidmouth), and a village (Knapford) where there was a flourishing stone quarry. Work on the baseboard began in late **1948**, and tracklaying began in Jan. **1949**. Very optimistically I promised to show the layout in action at the Church Fête as is held in our garden during the first week of July. It was only just made presentable in time! A week before the event the only things down on the baseboard, were the track and the wiring. The problem of automatic coupling and uncoupling had not yet been properly solved (I had at that time never seen it done), there were no station buildings, platforms, or any scenic effects whatsoever. There was a gap in the baseboard where the dock was to be, but that was about all. My brother, who had come down to stay for a week's holiday, and I had a pretty stiff job in the limited time we had to spare before the Fête. We worked till 11.0 or 12.0 most nights that week I remember. But the job was done and to our amazement and relief, the line looked well, and more important the locomotive and the automatic couplings which we had devised, worked throughout the afternoon almost without a hitch.

The track-work was very simple at first. A run-round loop at Tidmouth served the passenger platform, and another, similar, served the Dock. These were connected through a tunnel with Knapford station in the third side of the room. Here there were three parallel tracks; the furthest ran alongside the passenger platform, and the nearest curved round to a quarry on the room's fourth side. The centre track was used as a run-round for the other two.

Thomas, for he was the first ^{and only} engine I had, took a passenger train to Knapford, delivered the coaches and then, backing to the middle line, ran forward to the quarry. There he picked up loaded wagons and took them to the dock. At the dock run-round he ran forward to the quay to draw out the unloaded wagons. He then pushed the loaded wagons alongside the ship, and returned with the empties and brakevan to the quarry. A spell of passenger work followed. This process took

about 10-20 minutes, and could be repeated indefinitely.

I mentioned above that we introduced a tunnel into the layout. We did it in the last hectic days, as the easiest and quickest way of filling in a rather bare stretch of line between the two stations. My brother built a wooden framework, and we covered this with felt (of pipe lagging) which we found lying about. When the felt was tucked in place, we touched it up with green oil paint, and since the stiff paint brush tossed up the hairs, it looked quite effective, it was probably quite cosy inside, and thereby hangs a gate.

Later in the year, October I think, I went into the railway room one evening. As I had not used the line for some time I sent Thomas on a test run - light engine. He passed into the tunnel, and I heard a scrambling sort of noise. Thomas emerged from the tunnel followed by a mouse which poked its head out of the tunnel mouth, and then shot back inside. The next time through, Thomas and the mouse had a dead heat at the other end. Thomas rocked and nearly came off the rails, but he had had the best of it and the mouse retired hurt for it gave no sign when I sent Thomas through again. He reached Knapford and reversed. I gave him full regulator as he thundered into the tunnel. This time the mouse didn't wait. It shot out of the opposite entrance, streaked along the track, dived into the dock, leaped 3'6" from the baseboard to the floor, and was never seen again!

So much for the early days. Now let us see what the line was like just before dismantling.

Tidmouth had, as the photographs show, developed into quite a busy port. The Coastal steamer Nancy lay in her berth, and a fish dock had been built in which was moored the Trawler, Violet. There was a most efficient harbour master too. He was constantly to be seen doing his rounds in his launch. The station approach was along the quay-side and posts and chains were provided for the safety of the public, and there were plenty of life-belts handy - just in case! (see overleaf)

The siding accommodation in the yard was adequate, but not excessive and further extension had been planned. The two passenger platforms were known respectively as A & B. A, on the right, was used for all trains composed of main-line stock, while B, on the left was kept for local traffic. The two carriage sidings were approached from the shunting spur. The facilities in the locomotive yard were primitive, and were scheduled for improvement. They consisted of a timber coaling stage, a water column, and a Ransomes and Rapier type turntable. The space reserved for the ½ road engine shed can be seen on the left of the photographs, and in front of the control panel.

From Tidmouth the line, which was single, travelled first through open country, which soon narrowed to a cutting (where the tunnel used

at first " caused a number of accidents in the tunnel mouth, but practice soon cured that.

Looking back, I think visitors, and this included model railwaymen, were chiefly impressed by two things.

First, by the fact that magnetic coupling and uncoupling really worked every time. There is nothing very special about this.

The device used was not very standard (viable, and they were assisted, not by electro-magnets, but by small permanent magnets taken from Woolworth toys, and buried at strategic places between the coupling rails.

The second thing was the apparently inexplicable fact that the Sudrian express disappeared into Knapford tunnel with four corridor coaches, two of which were in GWR livery, and two in our own colours. Twenty minutes later (central time), the "Sudrian" engine returned hauling the "Wild Nor' Wester", which again consisted of four corridor coaches, three of which were in our GWR brown, and one in LMS livery.

The operator had not been near there, nor was there a switch on the loop, yet to all appearances, it was an entirely different train. How was it done? Very simply, but the answer will, I fear, shock the imagination. We painted the opposite sides of the coaches in different colours!

Locomotives & Rolling Stock

We had six locomotives:-

1. Thomas. 0-6-0T Essar Standard cast body of motor, painted blue, and lined out in red, as in the books.
2. Edward 4-4-0 Adapted from a standard 4-4-0 KMR 2P kit. At first running with the KMR motor supplied. This ran for several months, but the wheels were not entirely satisfactory, and derailments occurred from time to time, so I sent "Edward" to Stewart Reidpath for their standard wheels and Motor. The chassis they provided gave controllability and trouble free running.
3. Henry 4-6-0 A Graham Farish (1950 Henry) adapted. I had a lot of trouble with this loco at first. Bought second hand, it reached me in a deplorable condition. But, when all the dirt and fluff had been removed from the wheels, gears and motor, it proved quite a useful engine. The main disadvantage was that one had to start it with full regulator away, then with throttle down immediately afterwards. This made smooth starting impossible, and shunting difficult.
- 4- James 2-6-0 Professionally made (a G&SWR Mixed traffic loco designed by Drummond.) It was painted red with yellow lining as in the books. A beautiful model, but there was one way the motor, though of a well-

known and reputedly reliable make, was so unreliable, that the engine could never be put into regular service (Note W.A. 1989 Loco was sent 1983/84 to Stewart Reidpath for fresh chassis & Motor and returned completely transformed).

5. Percy, 0-4-0ST Body home made from brass parts supplied in a kit. Once more, the motor and wheels provided were a dead loss, so I sent the body to Essar for a chassis & motor (Note W.A. 1989, Percy was built in 1949, and was in regular service till 1978 when it was put on the duplicate list where it still remains - being used occasionally as a "spare". Livery, Green lined out with red, as in the books.

6. Duck, 0-6-0PT GWR 57XX, A Gaiety Models standard loco. Bought in June 1949 when Percy's chassis & motor showed signs of unreliability. Very powerful, but very noisy. The wheels, as bought, were not quite round. So my children called it Duck because of its peculiar waddling gait! Duck retained its GWR No. 5741 and livery. Duck gave excellent service through the years.

and

In general, for smooth running, starting and reliability, for instant response to the controller, Essar motors are very hard to beat. I have no connection with the firm, but I must say that their motors, though noisy, are far and away the best I have ever used.

Passenger stock

1 Semi-permanently coupled rake of ~~four~~ JP corridor coaches. These were used for the "Budrian" and the "Wild Not'Wester".

1 Semi-permanently coupled rake of three suburban coaches. These were home-made from litho papers, and were used for the long distance stopping trains.

1 Push-pull set of two branch line coaches of my own design. These were short (about 40') and permanently coupled together. They were mounted on wagon bogies and, surprisingly, looked quite authentic, and better still they could be pushed at speed over an S bend of 2ft radius without disaster.

Goods stock

3 Ventilated vans. Home made to my own design from CCW parts. They were mounted on diamond frame wagon bodies, and painted the standard HWR brown with yellow lettering and numbering.

3 Insulated vans (4whl SR type) litho sides and ends. Bodies were blocks of balsa wood. Chasses built up from Essar parts. BRMSB wheels.

2 Brakevans 1 Graham Farish. body only used. The chassis was discarded and a new one built up. (Note WA 1989. This van is still in service)

Goods stock Brake vans

Home made from a kit. Both painted in NWR dark grey livery, white lettering and numbers.

10 assorted open trucks and vans. Of these 8 were and 2 were

(see map)

of

for

Track beds & Scenery

There was nothing specially remarkable about this. The original track was laid using **brass rail** chaired to wooden sleepers. This took an immense amount of time; fitting required number of chairs on each length of rail, pinning down sleepers to track plan on baseboard then **spiking** the chaired rail to them, building points to **fit** each situation. Thus, ^{it} was the track laid for the first stage took so long, ^{in completing it} that we were left with only that last frantic week before the fête as described above.

Something quicker and easier was needed; so after ^{various} experiments, I adopted **as** standard a method which combine ideas gleaned from **PECO**, ^{by} **GEM**, **ERG** with an idea of my own, which may or may not be original.

Each formation is now planned out on the **jig** with **PECO** tapes. These are marked and cut so that they will fit together in formation without overlapping. Each piece of tape is then numbered and stuck to **1/8th"** **balsa** wood. When dry, the **balsa** is trimmed to trackbed width. Then card sleepers and **ballast** are stuck on and allowed to dry under pressure. Then, using a magnet (ordinary **Eclipse** type) as a **presser**, **Hotchkiss** No. 1 staples are forced through the sleepers into the **balsa** wood, and the soldered track is made up in the usual way being **ERG** type hardwood gauge strips. If the **balsa** wood track bed is backed by strong brown ^{glued on} **paper**, this counteracts warping, and makes a surprisingly strong job. Though my railway room suffered from extremes of temperature the staples never pulled out. Track made in this way is really "tailored" and fits together with or without fishplates with no trouble at all. It is quiet running too and can be made quieter still if desired by laying it on felt.

As mentioned above, a great deal more was planned than was actually accomplished. A Locomotive shed at Tidmouth was badly needed, and signal boxes at Knapford and Tidmouth were conspicuously absent. Knapford needed a goods yard too, and there was an obvious lack of background scenery generally. A branch line was to have started from the point marked X in the track plan by the quarry sidings. This was to be built on a peninsular baseboard in the centre of the room.

But incomplete though it was, the line gave my brother, my son and myself a great deal of pleasure; while the appreciation of visitors was shown by the fact that during the few years that the railway was running we were able to buy for the Church, two new **Almsbags**, two glass Communion Cruets, a silver Communion wafer box and an Altar

Frontal all from the contributions which they appreciatively put into the box at the time.

The ~~box~~ is at present no more, but a new line has been planned in a better and more spacious site, and work has begun. It is our hope that, profiting my past experience, we shall be able to make the new line even better than the old.

NOTE by W.A. 1988. AT Emneth I had delusions of grandeur with two large ~~attic 6'X6' tables~~. It would, I see now, have been far better to stick to the Tidmouth/Knapford and return loop plan, together with a not too ambitious branch line from Knapford.

Instead planned as a stretch of main line with one station, Knapford and two robust loops. These were to be automatically worked leaving the branch to be manually controlled. I never managed the automation of the loops and they were abandoned in 1959 or thereabouts when the success and popularity of my Ffarquhar (6' x 6') experimental line led us to concentrate on that. And so it has been ever since!

THE LAYOUTS AT EMNETH

As remarked above in the note I had too much space and visions of a Railway Empire.

My plan was to have a stretch of main line with one station (Knapford Junction) at each end of which line as disappeared through holes in the wall to ~~return~~ loops in the other attic which was also my workshop. One loop represented all stations to Barrow, the other the line to Tidmouth.

Each loop had four dead sections. The main line through Knapford was double track, and ~~a~~ press button switches for Up and Down lines admitted a train waiting on the loop into the station. Before it reached the station a wiper switch beneath the tender energised the dead section behind it on the loop and moved that train forward. In going forward that train energised the section behind it and so on round the loop. I experimented first with point motors, but latterly with telephone relays. I had better results with these, and got so far as at times to be able to control the process in the railway room at a panel with coloured lights showing which dead section in each loop was occupied. But not invariably. Generally when a visitor came all would go well for a time, and then when you were least expecting it the relay switch would fail to "make" and rear collisions resulted. The result was that my limited modelling time began to be taken up with maintenance and I had little or no train running at all. I began to long for something simpler and more reliable.

My opportunity came when, in 1955, I was asked to build a simple