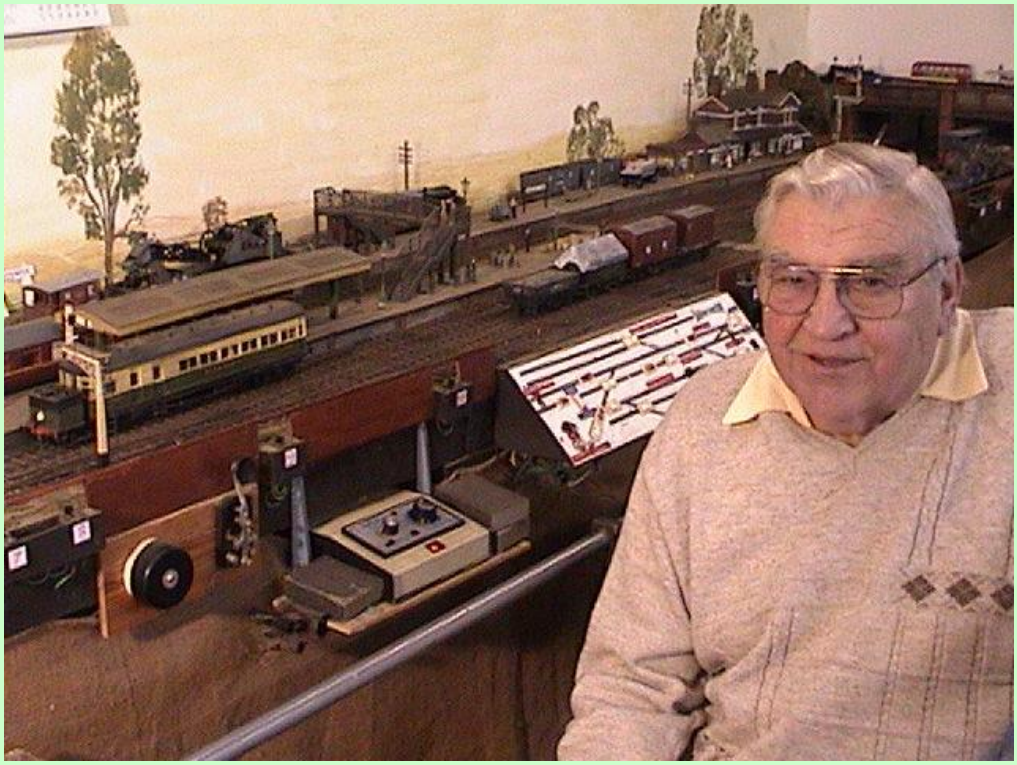
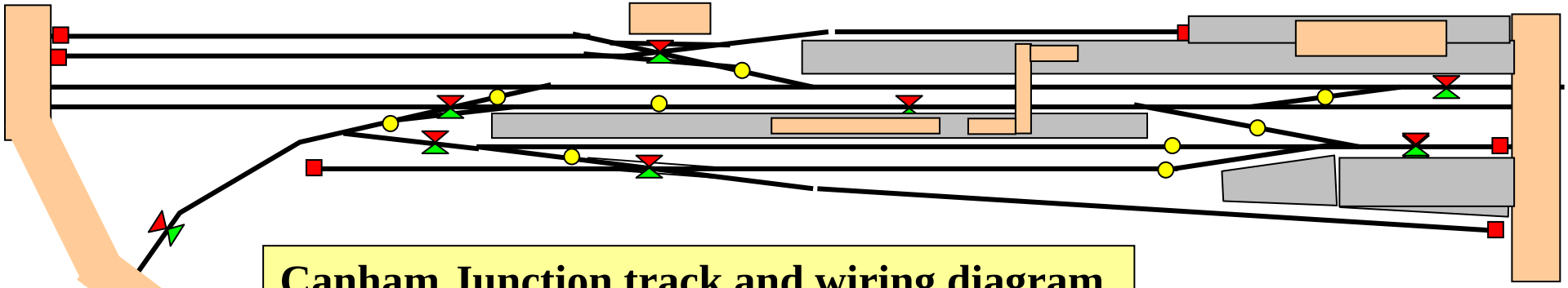
MY ‘O’ GAUGE STORY



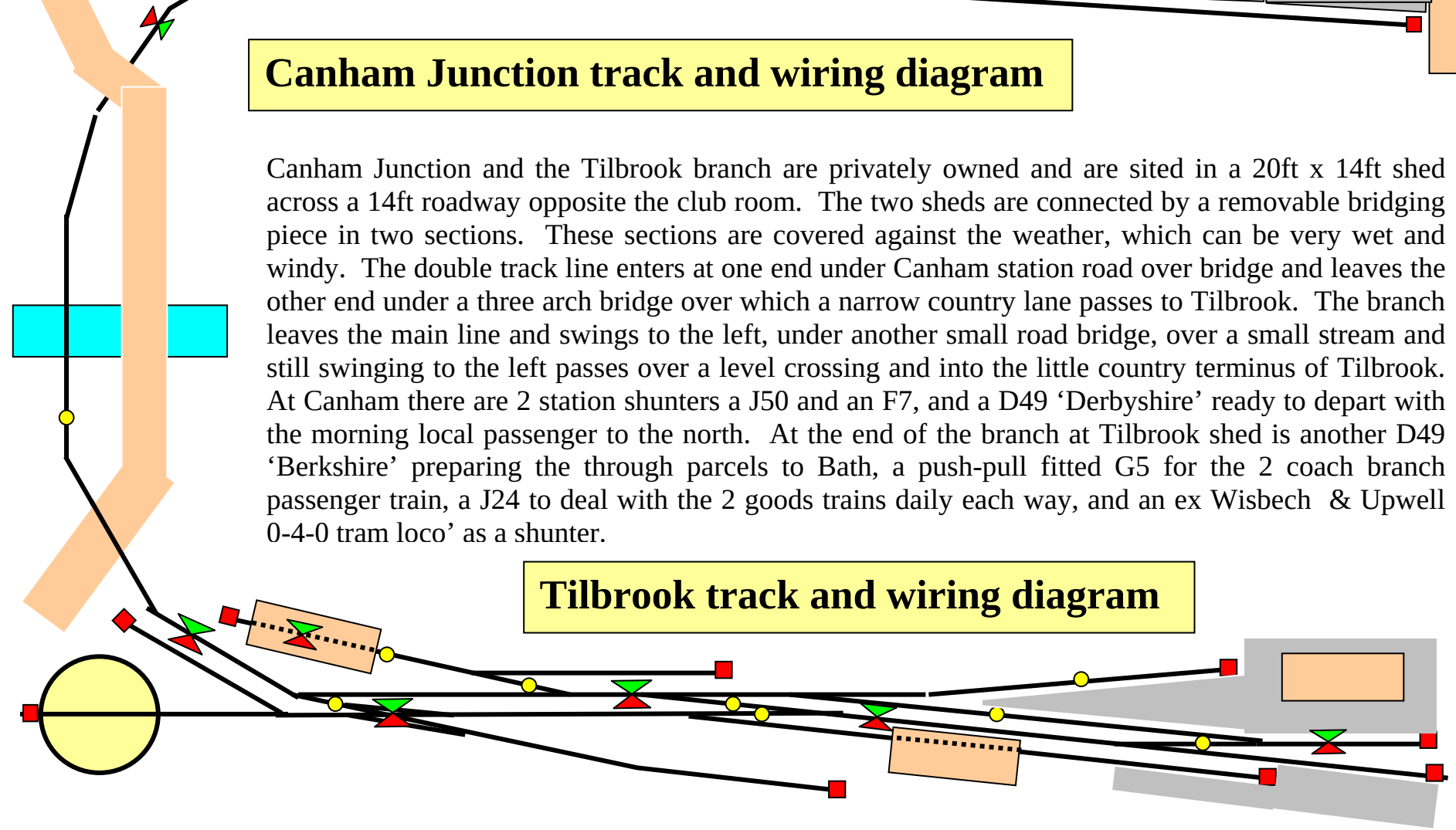
JOHN CASTLE



Canham Junction track and wiring diagram

Canham Junction and the Tilbrook branch are privately owned and are sited in a 20ft x 14ft shed across a 14ft roadway opposite the club room. The two sheds are connected by a removable bridging piece in two sections. These sections are covered against the weather, which can be very wet and windy. The double track line enters at one end under Canham station road over bridge and leaves the other end under a three arch bridge over which a narrow country lane passes to Tilbrook. The branch leaves the main line and swings to the left, under another small road bridge, over a small stream and still swinging to the left passes over a level crossing and into the little country terminus of Tilbrook. At Canham there are 2 station shunters a J50 and an F7, and a D49 'Derbyshire' ready to depart with the morning local passenger to the north. At the end of the branch at Tilbrook shed is another D49 'Berkshire' preparing the through parcels to Bath, a push-pull fitted G5 for the 2 coach branch passenger train, a J24 to deal with the 2 goods trains daily each way, and an ex Wisbech & Upwell 0-4-0 tram loco' as a shunter.

Tilbrook track and wiring diagram



One Christmas in the middle ’70s, the Peterborough & District Model Railway Club gave me three 3H wagon kits, a three plank open, a five plank open and a seven plank mineral plus a yard of Peco track. These kits were priced at £3.00 each and included Jackson fine scale wheels.

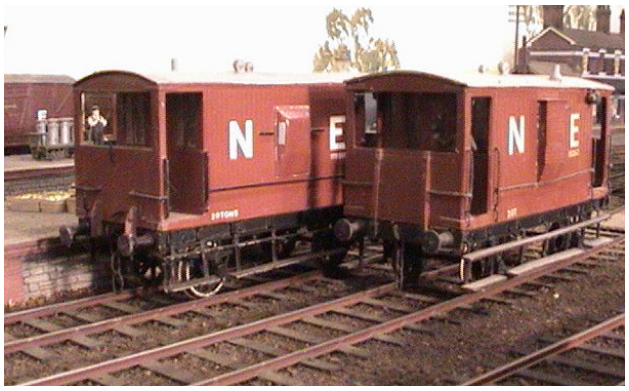
The first wagons

What wonderful value! Up until then I’d built and operated the ‘Washingley Branch’ (‘00’ gauge with a quarry feeder) in a shed 18ft x 20ft. (Terminus to fiddle yard but with a coal mine on the end of the station leading to the back end of the fiddle yard.)This made it possible to exchange empty for full wagons and a continuous circuit for running in loco’s. Anyway the Club decided that the next step I should take was to start in 7mm/ft. Little did I realise that the bug had bit.

The J-50

At this time kits were few and far between. Me being a bit of a tightwad with a nasty habit of not wanting to part with any hard earned cash, and being a small dirt farmer, finances had a bad habit of being extremely hard to find, the only option was to scratch build.

With the help of two club members, Dennis Ingram & Alan Rawson I started a J-50. Alan was very meticulous with his modelling, and all, and I mean all excess solder had to be removed, even where it would never be seen. There was one occasion when he painted my friend Garry’s V-4 “Bantam Cock”. Now Garry had left a fillet of solder behind the front buffer beam for strength. Alan spots this while preparing to paint and it had to go. Bantam Cock was duly returned resplendent in L.N.E.R. apple green. There was nothing wrong with Alan’s (Little Fellow we called him) paint job. The poor man’s answer to Brackenborough & Barnfield. I had the privilege of driving said loco on the club’s first layout. After running round in the fiddle yard and coupling up to return tender first it was understood why that fillet of solder was there in the first place as said buffer beam & screw coupling stayed with the coaches in the fiddle yard and the “Bantam Cock” had had a mastectomy. Needless to say the solder fillet returned. Dennis was an engineer by profession and this showed in his work. Building chassis and gear boxes, valve gear and motion to the highest degree and if said chassis did not run smoothly and quietly he said he would throw it at the nearest brick wall, and sometimes he did, unless I got there first. These two men when working together made many engines. An L.M.S. Beyer Garratt with rotating bunker, Cock of the North, V-2s’ and many others too numerous to mention. Getting back to the story and after building the J-50 and letting Alan paint it on the understanding that he didn’t remove all the unseen solder. This loco is still running in 2002.



Both brakes as built

A pair of brake vans and a Push - Pull set were needed as well as a few more wagons. There is a funny story attached to the brakes. At that time a

plan appeared in one of the mags' showing two versions of the same design.

On the plan were two sides, one had narrow planking and a steel ducket and the other one had wide planking and a large wooden ducket, also on the plan was one end showing on one side a short steel stanchion and the other a full length wooden one. So naturally I made one of each. Two club members saw what I was doing and decided to make one each. But being as they only wanted one van each they made it as drawn on the plan. Therefore both their vans had different sides and ends, with one short steel and one long wooden stanchion. So much for plans, as I once made a fridge van where the end view and the side view were 7 inches different in height, and I still don't know which was right and that van is still on the go.

The Epping & Ongar push-pull set

The coaches were a different proposition as I wanted Gresley teak suburbans, a full third and a brake third, to reproduce the Epping & Ongar push-pull. To cut a long story short I was helping my better half to pick out some wallpaper, and looking round the shelves, I spotted the answer to my problem of reproducing teak without having to paint it. There on the shelf was a roll of tape for putting on the edges of chipboard furniture. Made by Copydex and called Nifty tape in rolls 3/4in wide, self adhesive and different colours including wood grain. Grabbing the bull by both horns I bought 3 rolls, came home and started to build said coaches.

The sides were laminated with 3 layers of 20 thou plasticard, outside and inside with spacers between so that 15 thou plastiglaze would drop in for the windows. Then the panelling strips, again 20 thou plastic strip, were fixed in place. Next take out the glazing and paint the entire side the colour of the panelling. When dry cut the nifty tape to fit in the spaces in the panels, peel of the backing and it sticks itself. Not too bad if I say so myself. Now, with a loco, a few wagons and a pair of coaches, it was time to make somewhere to run them.

With a 20ft wall and 14ft across the end it was thought possible to build a terminus to fiddle yard layout. Portable of course, with 5ft by 20in boards and four of these were quickly erected along one wall. Nine fine scale points were required and Dennis said "make me an articulated pair of full thirds and I will build the points". Now Murphy's law appeared and showed me that 20in is a tinge too narrow for what was in mind. To arrange crossovers on a curve so as to eliminate buffer locking it meant that the track had to weave its way along the boards back and forth. So with the first 3 boards up and running a quick lash up was arranged for the fiddle yard. A 3ft x 3ft triangular corner piece and an 8ft x 18in fiddle board with a 15in extension bolted on for a sector plate. The next problem was the station run round loop, yes you've guessed it, not long enough, so back to the drawing board.

Tilbrook extension

By this time Dennis was moving house and would be too far away, so he taught me how to make pointwork and he gave me one or two very useful jigs and things. Now remember, when we started it was going to be portable. O.K. A 9ft 3in. fiddle yard board with no scenery, shove it on the roof rack. Problem solved. Now for the run round extension and where to put it. The best place was the start of the curve leading to the corner, so a start was made on a large lump of track consisting of a crossover including a double slip and a point leading to the turntable, all on a gentle curve and built in one piece. This piece was over a yard long and problem 3 was that said piece of track straddled the join between boards 3

& 4, thus making a 10ft board with scenics, plus a turntable when built. The brilliant decision was then made to make Tilbrook (that's what we christened it) permanent.

In the meantime I'd scratch built a J-24 and an F-7, some more wagons and teak coaches, including an, as yet unused, Gresley articulated restaurant set. The bow end was a bit of a cock up as I'd used plastic wood and it shrank. Next I used car body filler, much better.

The Gresley articulated Restaurant set

Around this time in '79/80 I had got divorced and remarried. As a farmer this was a very worrying situation to be in, as all your joint assets are added up and ex-wife gets a 1/3 of the total. To cut a long bitter story short, I managed to retain the farm and eventually, after nearly 2 years got back into the farmhouse. The Club members breathed a sigh of relief, as they had been hunting for alternative accommodation. When things got back to normal I made a D-49 Shire.

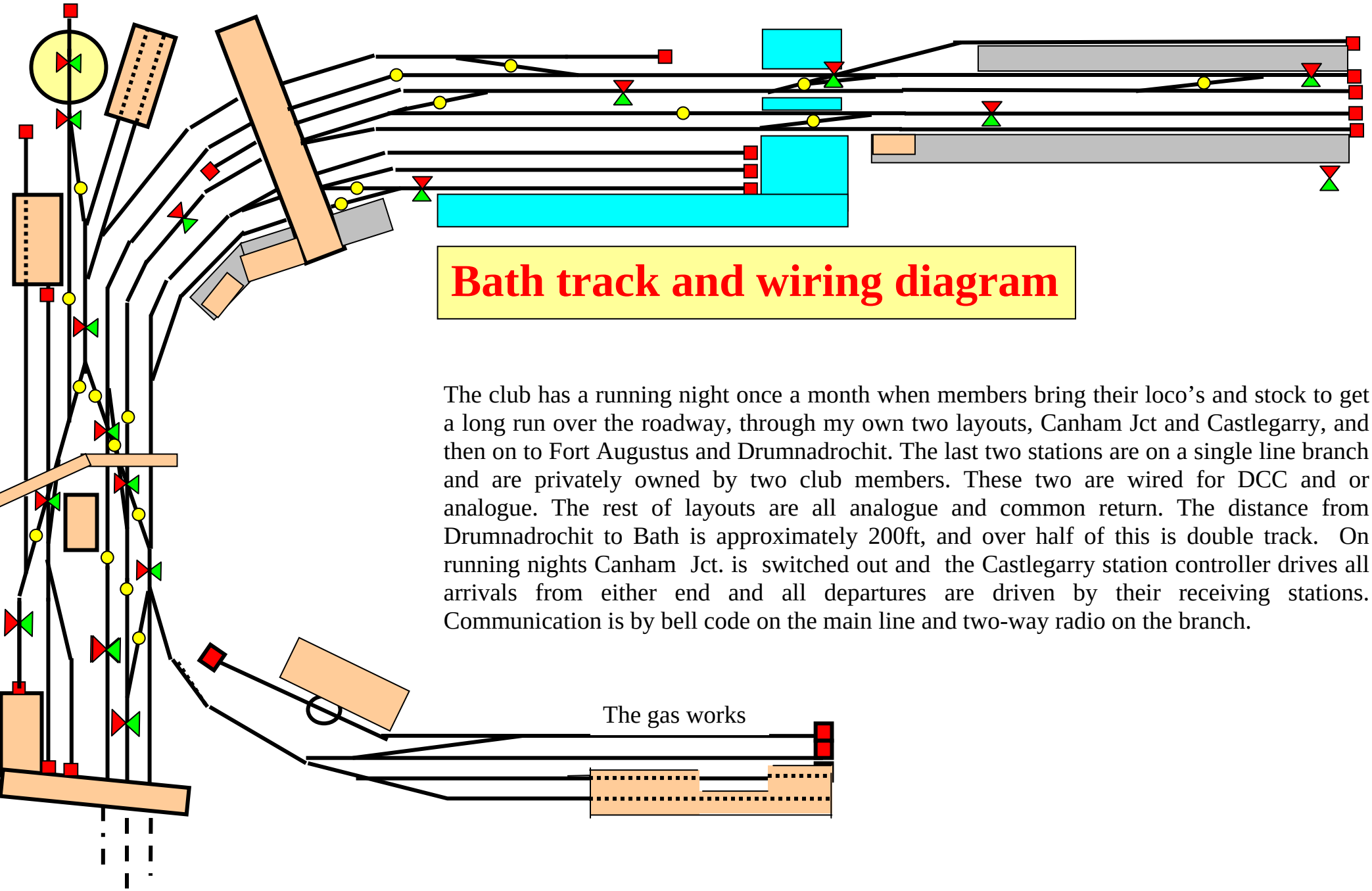
D-49

With this loco' I tried out a different approach to the normal practice of side play on the front bogie, which leaves the 4 coupled drivers to steer it round the curves, thereby ending up with excessive overhang on the front buffer beam. My idea was to fix the bogie to steer the loco' and make the front pair of drivers with a bit of side play, by letting the motor and gearbox move with the axle and also a bit of side movement on the back axle. Not very prototypical but operationally looked and ran well, even on a bit of 4ft. radius test track..

Now it was the time to tackle the turntable. I'd put this off for so long owing to all the pontificating by so called experts who air their "How it must be done" views in all the model railway mag's that I'd seen. With me being a farmer, and being able to mackle up things with a bit of binder string and baling wire, I came to the conclusion that there must be an easier and simpler way to make said table. All it's got to do is to turn round and with only one road leading off, it only needs to rotate in one direction. So cut a circle out of the chipboard, drop it an inch and rejoin with an inch and a half wide strip of brick or stone, a saw cut width thick for the well walls. The motor that appeared out of Dennis' pocket was an AC motor, with a slow running gearbox built in. Originally this motor had worked a strobe light in a disco. It was buckshee and I didn't argue.

The turntable at Castlegarry

I used pieces of old Meccano to make a framework to hold the motor underneath, and another reduction box using meccano gears and chain drive to a central shaft that had a fixed 2in pulley with a large rubber tyre half an inch from the top. The deck had the same wheel and tyre arrangement firmly fixed underneath. Drop it on top of the other wheel and you have friction drive. How do you line it up, simple, make sure the rails on the deck overhang by a ¼ in. Now fix a metal crank at the side of the left hand rail leading to the table, and also make sure that the table turns in a clockwise direction, so that

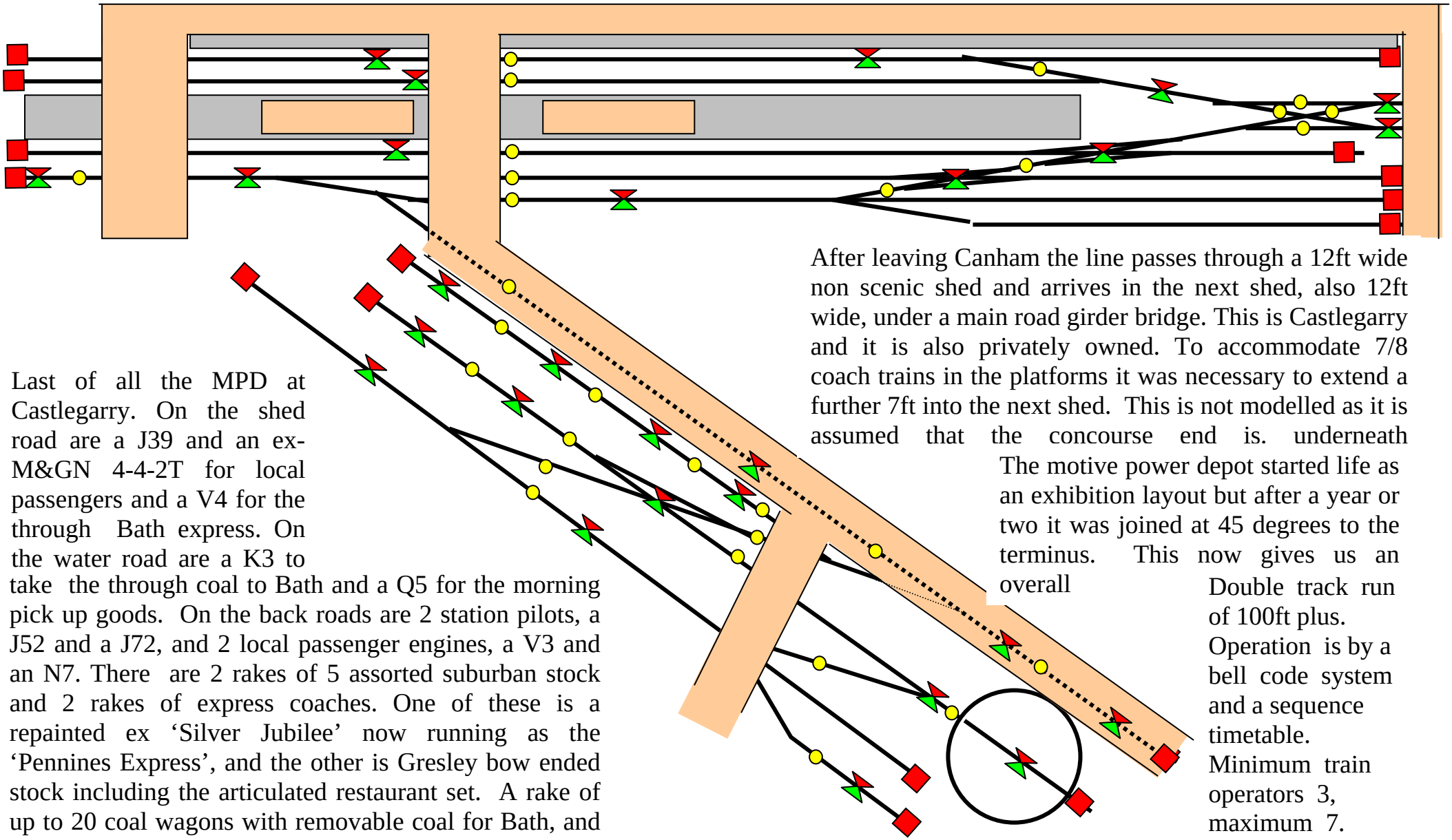


Bath track and wiring diagram

The club has a running night once a month when members bring their loco's and stock to get a long run over the roadway, through my own two layouts, Canham Jct and Castlegarry, and then on to Fort Augustus and Drumnadrochit. The last two stations are on a single line branch and are privately owned by two club members. These two are wired for DCC and or analogue. The rest of layouts are all analogue and common return. The distance from Drumnadrochit to Bath is approximately 200ft, and over half of this is double track. On running nights Canham Jct. is switched out and the Castlegarry station controller drives all arrivals from either end and all departures are driven by their receiving stations. Communication is by bell code on the main line and two-way radio on the branch.

The gas works

Castlegarry track and wiring diagram



After leaving Canham the line passes through a 12ft wide non scenic shed and arrives in the next shed, also 12ft wide, under a main road girder bridge. This is Castlegarry and it is also privately owned. To accommodate 7/8 coach trains in the platforms it was necessary to extend a further 7ft into the next shed. This is not modelled as it is assumed that the concourse end is. underneath

The motive power depot started life as an exhibition layout but after a year or two it was joined at 45 degrees to the terminus. This now gives us an overall Double track run of 100ft plus. Operation is by a bell code system and a sequence timetable. Minimum train operators 3, maximum 7.

Last of all the MPD at Castlegarry. On the shed road are a J39 and an ex-M&GN 4-4-2T for local passengers and a V4 for the through Bath express. On the water road are a K3 to take the through coal to Bath and a Q5 for the morning pick up goods. On the back roads are 2 station pilots, a J52 and a J72, and 2 local passenger engines, a V3 and an N7. There are 2 rakes of 5 assorted suburban stock and 2 rakes of express coaches. One of these is a repainted ex 'Silver Jubilee' now running as the 'Pennines Express', and the other is Gresley bow ended stock including the articulated restaurant set. A rake of up to 20 coal wagons with removable coal for Bath, and a rake of up to 20 fitted vans. All non-stop to Bath.

the tracks are lined up when it hits. Then switch off the motor. If you forget the two rubber tyres act as a slip clutch.

Later tables are a bit more sophisticated in that the deck is directly driven by the shaft and the crank is wired opposite to the left hand rail which causes a short circuit stopping the motor dead and lining up the track at the same time.

Tilbrook level crossing

Down by the river

The road bridge

As time went on I found the fiddle yard was a bit of a bind. I couldn't fit any sort of scenic break that looked right as the fiddle points were too near the turntable. A major re-think was needed and the most logical solution was to move the fiddle yard to the opposite 20ft wall, but what a waste of a 20ft wall. Why not build a junction station, double track main line and all that went with it. The decision arrived at, after many weeks of drawing plans, was to have road overbridges at both end of the 20ft run with redundant tractor

A-4 and "The Pennines" passing Canham

wing mirrors fitted to make out the line carried on north and south.

This junction was called Canham and the scenics fitted in quite well with level crossing, river bridges and another road bridge to join it all together.

About this time Garry and I had made an exhibition layout of a motive power depot.

The ash pit at Castlegarry sheds

This was to show off his loco's and my point work etc. We showed it a few times at various places, but with transport and the weight of a pair of 3ft x 5ft boards and old age as well, we thought it better to stay home. At the same time I made up an 8ft x 2ft board to demonstrate track.

Twin track onto a scissors crossover followed by two double slips and a three way plus Y's and ordinary points. Now two sheds north of Canham were the clubs scratch builders. These members were coerced into swapping sheds with Garry. All I had to do was make holes in two 9in brick walls and Canham had got another outlet. By the way, these sheds or loose boxes were 12ft wide and 14ft deep. Not really wide enough to fit a main line terminus in. The new demo' board was fixed and platforms fitted and Garry's MPD was fitted at 45deg to the new station, and yes you've guessed it, Castlegarry.

The Scissors at Castlegarry

Now followed many years of playing trains. Garry had built a K-3, V-3, N-7, Q-5, J-52, J-72, B-12, J-39 and an M.& G.N. 4 - 4 - 2T as well as the Bantam and a fully working 25 ton break down crane.

The re-built Garry's crane

All I had built were track, wagons and coaches plus making the Silver Jubilee set of articulated coaches for a club member, who took them home and painted them a horrible silver colour. These coaches, on the death of said member, were not deemed good enough for sale and would I accept them. The hand was snatched off, as a repaint would make them look a lot better.

Around this time (mid 90's) the club sold its semi portable layout to a club member and thoughts, mostly mine, were turned to a twin track main line terminus, which later on could extend over the roadway into Canham Junction. This shed measures 26ft x 18ft and I was asked to draw up a plan. The only prototype plan that had the most things in the right places was Bath Green Park. This meant that the basic layout could be followed with the MPD and turntable in the corner and the goods yards on the inside of the corner to make 3-link coupling up easier.

An empty Bath MPD as seen from the main

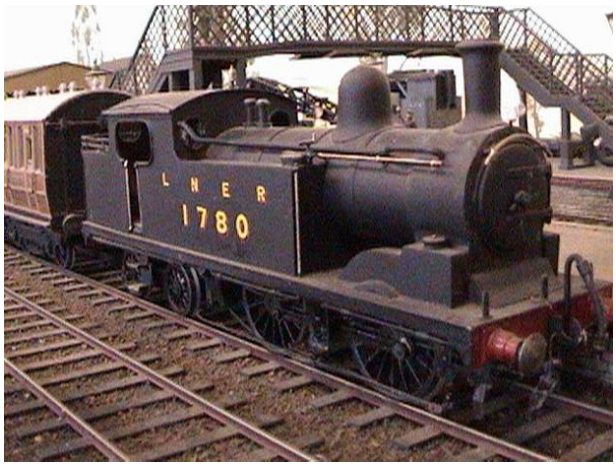
The prototype only had one facing crossover on the main line and to make signalling simple I omitted it from the model plan. Taking out this crossover means trains enter one platform only, but any one of 3 platforms and 2 carriage sidings can be used as departure lines.

The committee passed the plan and I spent many days and nights making track, laying it, and wiring it all up including making colour lights and upper quadrant signals. Next question, where is the fiddle yard, answer Canhan Junction. When? When I build a 14ft bridge and make another hole in the wall.

Going back to '84 Jack Ray came and did a slide/cassette show for the Guild and he came back 8 years later to photo the finished Castlegarry and Garry's Craven Brothers crane and saying I'll be back when the bridge has been built and we can do the rest. Unfortunately our club is like other clubs, more talk than action, and although Bath is fully operational it is seriously lacking in the building and scenery department. So I decided to go ahead and do it myself.

Another loco wheel arrangement that I thought needed a long look at was any 0-4-4T especially

if it had a long wheelbase. So I experimented and made the rear bogie fixed with no side play and the drivers and motor as another bogie, with the bogie pivot a screw drivers width behind the leading axle. This leaves plenty of room for the other drivers to move sideways as they are inside the water tanks. Yes it does work and it looks right. This loco', a N.E. G-5, is one that came to the eastern region to work the Epping and Ongar Push-Pull unit as seen on the Tilbrook to Canham branch.



G-5 at Canham with the push-pull

Up until 1997 Garry and I had many enjoyable running sessions between our two sheds, and had worked out a sequence timetable, not only for passenger trains, but also freight workings over a six day week. Why six days you ask? It's simple says I, because you can divide 6 by 1, 2, 3 and 6.


Sugar beet loads

This means that individual wagons can run daily, as milk tanks do, or every two days, twice, or once a week. This gives operating a purpose and therefore more enjoyment.

Also during this time we made 4 video films. First was the 'Derailment at Tilbrook'. a 90 minute epic showing a loco' coming off the rails at Tilbrook station throat and the subsequent work required to get the breakdown crane, and it's associated train, from Castlegarry to Tilbrook while still keeping to the timetable and also showing the crane lifting the loco' back on the rails. Next was a shorter film entitled 'The Family Outing'. A father and his three young sons are going on the train from Tilbrook to Castlegarry to visit the MPD and then return via Canham Junction. The next two epics were a 'Day at Castlegarry' and a 'Days train spotting at Canham Junction'.


Some of the wagon loads


More wagon loads

It was at this time, soon after we had running rights through to Bath, that Garry decided that as his eyesight was failing, and he was also having trouble with his memory, that operating on open days was getting on top of him. I kept telling him not to worry, but to no avail, he'd made up his mind to sell his loco's and layout, everything except the crane. This put me in a bit of a fix, as I'd only got 5 engines plus a tram loco' and no

mpd. Only one thing to do, buy the lot, sod the expense. You can't take it with you so bloody well enjoy it while you can.

Another of our retired club members, Geoff Kitchen, offered to operate that end of the line, and with Garry's help did a very good job. During the next 3 years with Geoff at one end, me in the middle, and another early retired member, Keith Rimes, operating Bath we were having a whale of a time. We would pick a day and start at 10 in the morning, have a packed lunch and tea or coffee, and finish a days running around 3.30 in the afternoon. Garry came and watched us for a while until his failing eyesight stopped him from driving. It was very sad to see him looking at his life's work and wondering how long he would still see them. I used to tell him they would stay here as long as I do.

Castlegarry road scene

Then out of the blue came the news that Geoff had had a second heart attack, and while his wife and Keith were visiting him in the hospital he had another attack and died. It has been difficult to find a retired operator who can play during the day and who would be able to run the mpd as well as Castlegarry on their own. From experience on the exhibition operating circuit it is damn near impossible to find anyone who will stick rigidly to the timetable or sequence. And as Castlegarry, Canham and Bath are in different and not adjacent sheds and also the only contact between them is the bell code system, the running sequence has to be observed to the letter.

Going back to the late '80's Garry took his mpd layout to the big East of England show at Peterborough, and while there we met Chris Woodcock, who was in a wheelchair. He asked us no end of questions about layouts. So we invited him to a club night to show him what was what. He wanted a layout and could we show him

A scale copy of my father's drum & elevator

how. Certainly said I, and off he went to draw up plans of what he wanted. He came back with his plan and we modified it to fit in the space available and to take into account that being in a wheelchair meant that he had to operate it from the front and not have anything underneath. This meant that all the point and signal rodding from the Ambis lever frame had to be on top, so we fitted it all under the removable tops of the goods and station platforms. Garry made him a G.E. G-7. 0-4-4T and a G.E. J-15 0-6-0 and I made all the point work and did the electrics including a small turntable on the end of the run round loop. With two tracks leading to the table it meant that it had to be able to turn in either direction and our method of using an AC motor was out of the

The garage at Castlegarry

question. Back to the drawing board.

The answer was a DC motor and 4 moving cranks to short circuit the drive motor. First the two cranks between the tracks were made as one but making sure that the two contact areas were electrically separated and of different polarities as they would make contact with one or other of

the table rails. We made these three push rods in wooden slides so that Chris' deformed fingers could operate them quite easily. Remember only push one at a time. As Chris was using a Compspeed controller with a built in overload it was not necessary to have a separate cut out. All he has to do is drive the loco' on. Switch the power from the track to the table, and turn the same controller either left or right, and then push the appropriate rod, and when the table makes contact with it the overload red light comes on, switch off and put the power back to the track. Just like falling of a log. Since then Chris has finished his layout off, making a first class job of it too. By the way it's called St Wulfram and I've got a video of it as well. I forgot to mention that we built the basic parts in one of my sheds and after we had laid the track and wired it up and had it working, (There were two 7ft x 2ft 6in boards) we took it apart and reassembled it in one of his bedrooms.

The local talent doing a spot of sunbathing

Another early retired friend who lives too far away to be a club member sometimes operates Castlegarry. That's Trevor Jones, or Jones the train. He is a good operator as he has a huge "00" layout that also runs to a strict timetable and he does like to run things as per prototype. That has brought us to March 2002.

It's now May 2005 and apart from the odd bit of wear and tear, all four stations are running as intended and one of our junior members, Will, did a first class job of operating Castlegarry but only too soon had to go away to college. So, back to square one.

To make life a little easier I did another sequence timetable using Canham and Tilbrook as a fiddle yard for Bath and not using Castlegarry at all. Trains into and out of Bath were the same as before, except for some long loco's that were unable to turn at Tilbrook were running back tender first.

Loading fruit at Canham

One of these was the B-1 arriving at Canham with a vans train and returning with the Tilbrook timber train. Another was the arrival of the A-4 with the Pennines Express. This loco returned to Bath with the vans train. All other loco's were turned at Tilbrook. With only two operators this worked extremely well and gave me the time to watch operations in Bath as Canham was nothing better than a glorified fiddle yard with bags of operator spare time.

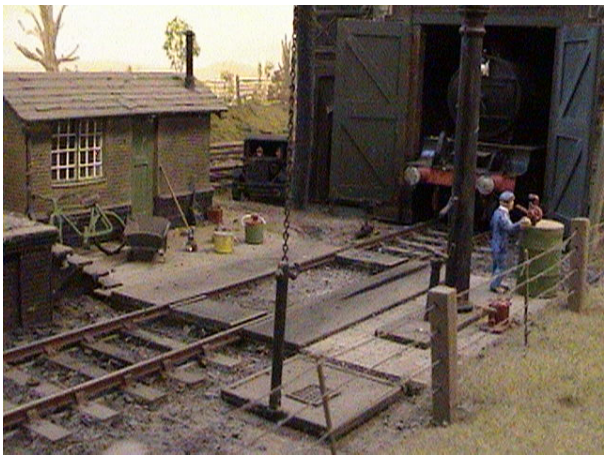
This induced me to make a more comprehensive sequence sheet showing which turnouts (all numbered) to push and pull between each

Platform side of Tilbrook Station

movement, also which controller to use and where to place stock etc. This makes Bath virtually idiot proof. At the end of a running session all the stock ends up in Canham and fills up every piece of track.

The club has a running night every four weeks, so nearly all of my stock has to be shunted up to Castlegarry and that fills that room completely, including the spare shed between it and Canham. Members then bring along their loco's and stock

and Canham is again used as a fiddle yard. I've tried to get them to organise a program of events so that the fiddle operator knows what is happening. All to no avail as it appears that they only want to know; does it work and what will it pull? Another big problem is inexperienced drivers causing damage to other members stock by not having the route set properly and derailing said train and the damage caused by clumsy handling when replacing on the rails.



Tilbrook shed and ash pit

Another reason is that the majority of club member's are not "O" gauge, and do not realise that most stock is heavy with lots of delicate parts. As Barrie Walls will tell you it is damn near impossible to find good operators.

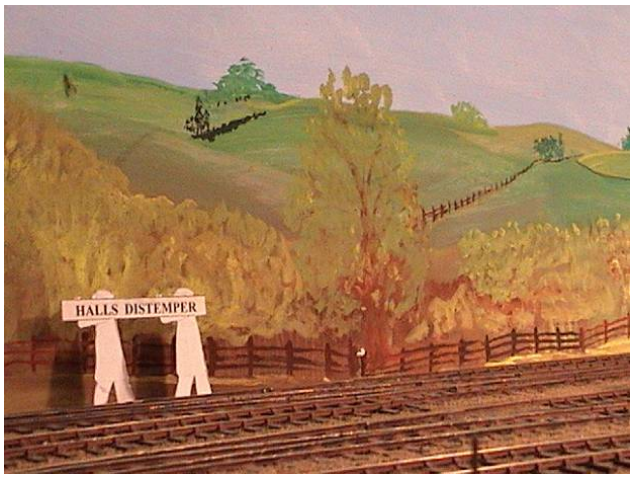
F-7 and J-24 on Tilbrook turntable

Going back to October 2004, Garry's wife rang to say he'd died the week before. He had suffered from Alzheimer's for some considerable time and ended up in hospital where he had a fatal heart attack. At his cremation his wife asked me if I would like his breakdown crane. Of course I would. Then she told me it was in a very bad state. After about a month I arranged to fetch it, and she was right, it was in a very bad state. They had only recently moved into an old people's

Milk tanks at Castlegarry yard

complex and the match truck, tool van, crane cab end and the control gear had disappeared. His wife said he had tried to fix it after their grandchildren had played with it, and tangled up all the cables on the lifting gear. One of the three old Triang XO4 motors was burnt out, the other had no brushes and the motor underneath that worked the slewing gear had lost it's pick ups. Also the two main side plates that held the cable drums a gear wheels had come apart. All this was stuffed into a plastic carrier bag.

As there was no work on the farm at that time of the year I spent the next three weeks, full time plus overtime to get it back into working order complete with a new cab end, match truck, tool van and control box. This involved replacing one motor and fixing the other and threading ten feet of bootmakers thread for the jib. I threaded this five times before I got it right. I nearly went potty. Christmas came and went and I thought it was time to get on with Bath scenery so that I could do a reasonable film to supplement the others.

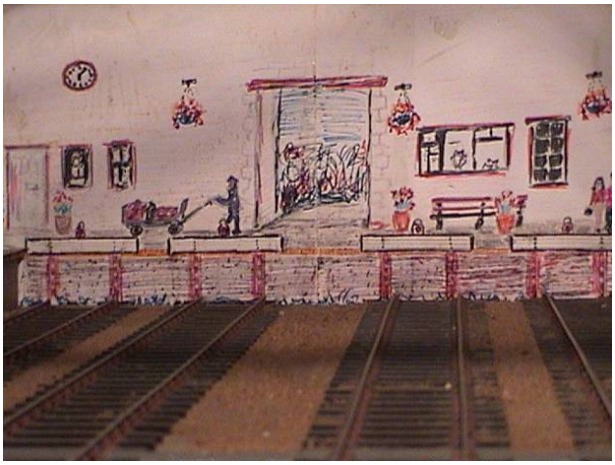


Backscene at Bath

So armed with four small pots of Tester emulsion, two sky blue, one pale green and one beige, I tackled 44 feet long x 2 feet high of white hardboard. I could have done with Michelangelo, as having to lean over three feet of track and signalling is a bit of a nightmare. After that had dried I fished out of the store cupboard 2 or 3 boxes of acrylic painting sets. These had been there so long that odd ones had dried up. They had come from a job lot at an auction donkey's years ago.

Trying to hide the wall that isn't there

A few years back our secretary, Pete Norman, had drawn four sheets of Georgian terrace houses on thin card covering about 8 feet of backscene, and these had been temporarily hung behind the still unfinished station. So with no more to do I un-hung 'em, and removed the painted sky round the chimney pots and wall papered them across the end wall behind the concourse and 5 feet along the back with jackdaws flying over and nesting in the chimneys.



The hand painted concourse at Bath

As the concourse end can only be seen by looking under the overall roof, and space is extremely short I painted a rough representation of a concourse including 4 buffer stops on a sheet of card, and pasted it on the end wall.

Now looking at the left side of these terraces, how can you disguise the fact that there is no end wall on a full frontal view. Answer, paint a great big tall tree over the last two inches of end wall, plus four inches past it, and then an ever diminishing row of trees going away in the distance heading for the skyline. Unlike the concourse end that can only be seen when looking under the overall roof, the perspective with the trees has to look right wherever it's viewed from. The next 14 feet with a river valley, was hand painted with fields, hedges, fences and woodlands disappearing into the far distance. I lightly drew in the river, turning to the left and then to the right with willow trees on both banks getting smaller as it meandered off in the wild blue yonder. The foreground trees now hide most of the water.

The next problem was when viewed from under the railway bridge an inch and a half of baseboard framing stuck up in front of the hardboard back-scene.

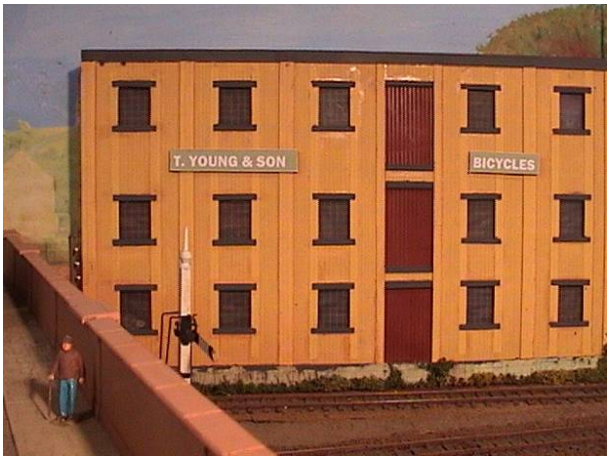
I know says I, lock gates, the more modern ones with tall wind up sluice gates at the low end. Nip off in the car to the local river and film said gate end. Next draw the closed gate on a piece of 1/8 inch foam filled card as wide as the river (about 1 foot) and then draw the up river end plus banks and walls. Don't forget to cut out the foam board between the sides and top of the sluice frame. When placed an inch in front of the baseboard frame, the view from under the bridge looks

The lock gates

three-dimensional. Also when viewed from over the bridge the perspective looks about right.

By the way these back-scenes are 2 x 8 feet sheets of hardboard, and the join between them is covered by a 2 inch wide hardboard strip. To prevent these boards from distorting in damp weather they were laid out flat, upside down, on a concrete floor and painted well with water. When dry painted with white emulsion and fixed to the shed wall with a batten along the top edge and left to hang free behind the baseboard.

The next problem was what to do with the area before the main road over-bridge. As there was a bit more room owing to the fact that the track was curving ready for the corner, a low relief factory, 4 inches wide next to the bridge and tapering to 1 inch at the other end. This building, 26 inches long by 15 inches high, was duly made using 2 ft x 3 ft sheets of brick paper that club member John Foster had produced using his firm's computer.



The factory

Another large tree and a wooded area covered the small end and a low relief bush filled the gap next to the bridge. The base-board was now much too wide to hand paint a town scene, so I bought a pair of Peco '00' factory sheets and asked J.F. if he could get his firms computer to turn them to 7 mm/ft. We ended up with enough buildings to cover over 25 ft of back-scene. Now we came to the 17 ft. between the bridge at the exit end and the turntable in the corner. After deliberating what to do, as painting the sky has been a long arm job, I thought I would do as Garry had done in Castlegarry ie. build a viaduct with a road on top. This was built out of hardboard in 4 interlocking pieces, and fixed at each end with the centre parts 2 inches out for the road.

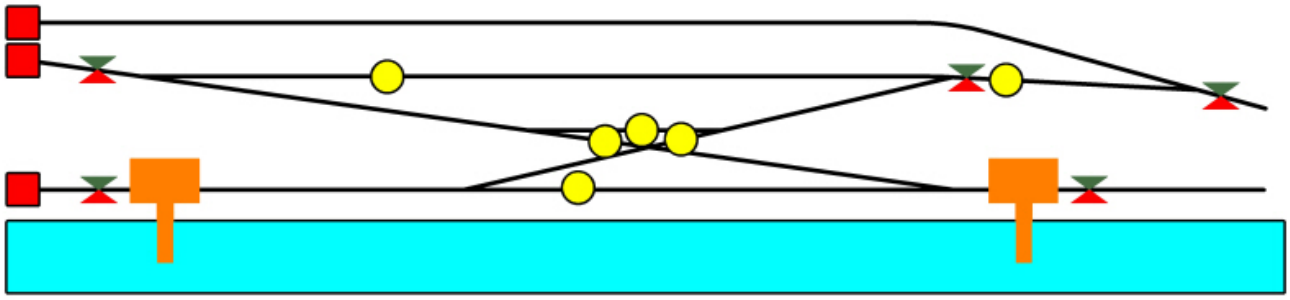
Behind this went the enlarged back-scenes. Reminds me of 'Coronation Street'. This is where Gwen, the club's hon. treasurer came into her own with her wallpapering experiences. We also found out about spray on glue. Wonderful stuff as long as you use it up in one day. At the present time it doesn't matter where you stand in the clubroom the back-scene is 99% right.

I wrote a film script back in '98 called "The Inaugural Run" but Bath would have to be finished first. With this, and the fact that the 25

Part of the viaduct with road above

View of the main road bridge from the yard

ton crane was not available, it had to be shelved. Now, except for the layout not yet being complete, I thought it was high time that I got on with it before it was too late. To commemorate the life of our President and club founder the new factory bears his name, Tom Young & Son, cycle manufacturers. He was a wonderful man and an excellent ambassador for the hobby. Every year he would arrange for the Peterborough mayoral party to visit us at our headquarters. It's a great pity he is no longer with us. His main hobby was vintage cycles, and there are many photographs of him riding his 'Boneshaker' at shows all over the U.K. and his epic journey from Lands End to John o' Groats for Age Concern.



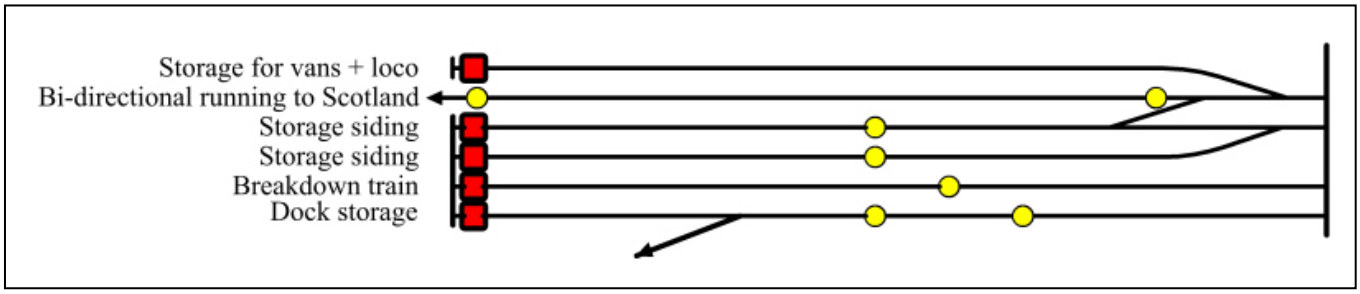
The new dock board

It's now September 2007, and about three years ago I started going to Trevor Jones's to help operate his very large "OO" layout, and it was there that I met his operating crew. Two of these, Bob Hex and Neil Blackall now operate Bath and Castlegarry. Both are ex- British Rail, Bob a train manager on Eurostar and Neil a signalman so their knowledge of railway operation is an asset. Also about this time a new arrival from our local village joined our main club as an "N" gauge modeller, but after watching and operating the "O" gauge he changed. His name is Jonathan Wray or J.W. for short. He was G.W.R. but now he's North British, and with another club member Brian Robinson bought our club secretary's layout (Framlingham) that is situated three sheds up from Castlegarry. With these three members, Bob, Neil and J.W. plus Keith and myself, running sessions were becoming much better and we could invite other groups to visit.

I went to the Guild's 50th to help Chris Simpson to film the event and while there I bought four china clay hoods from Skytrex. It didn't stop there did it? Soon a Sentinel and a G.E Tram, 2 lowmacs + another eight assorted wagons duly arrived. On top of this John Foster was moving north, so he changed from "O" to"OO" as he wouldn't have as much room to play with. Needless to say I ended up with his scratch built Sentinel railcar, a G-5 loco' and 12 unmade Parkside kits at half price. When this lot had been built + 4 home made hoppers, where to run them. I know said I, I'll build an extension.

Underneath Tilbrook and unseen since it was shoved out of sight was the 8ft x 18in original fiddle yard with track and a Peco Y point and a home made three way one. So I lifted the rails and cleaned up the board and decided to build a dock yard with two operating cranes. At the start I was going to fit it in Bath, but with the sudden growth in loco's and stock I needed much more space, so I looked in the next shed to Castlegarry, where if you remember, I'd already added 6ft for longer trains. So why not extend it the full 12ft of the shed. So armed with another interior flush fitting door a board 2ft wide was fitted. To utilise all this extra space 2 home made points were built to fiddle yard standards, i.e. one sleeper instead of three. Also 8 yard lengths of straight track to the same standard.

To make things interesting where the arrow is pointing is the 'N' gauge room and the next shed is where Framlingham was. We asked the Diddie men if it was possible to raise the height of their layout by round about a foot, and they said yes, as it would make it nearer to eye level. After knocking holes through two walls and fixing a 6 in wide shelf and laying track on it we are connected to Framlingham fiddle Yard. The arrow at the bottom is where at right angles the dock yard board will be. We shall now want another operator in this room. Now for the time being we can hold all the stock in sidings. When all this is finished there will be through running between Framlingham and Bath, a distance of 140ft or 1.14miles. There is still a fair amount of work to be done, but I do believe we shall succeed.



The new dock yard

Carrying on from Sept' 2007, Framlingham is being altered into a North British station in Scotland and renamed as Drumnadrochit. The fiddle yard that was at the rear of the layout behind a high level roadway and fed from the hidden main line head shunt has been disconnected and relocated at 45 degrees along the shed's back wall to connect with Castlegarry three sheds up. The original head shunt was extended another 4ft in the left shed with a point leading to the new exchange sidings. The new brewery will join the fiddle yard at the station end. The high level road will now disappear behind the brewery. There are plans afoot, if stock will negotiate 4ft 6in radius curves, to raise Drumnadrochit by 5in and fit a loop in this next shed so that trains will leave Drumnadrochit and return through the hole in the wall underneath itself and be in the right direction to proceed to Bath. This will save having to swap ends with through trains and also do away with point work that is out of sight of the operators. This new fiddle yard would give a much longer run and could be turned into an intermediate small station in it's own right.

This new idea gives us a scale ½ mile of single track with a passing loop station in the middle. This could be Fort Augustus and if fitted with a turntable the Royal Mail coach would be able to turn round ready to be picked up by the night sleeper, returning south to Bath from Drumnadrochit

Above is the new Royal Mail van standing in platform 2 at Canham Junction. The next photo' is taken as the mail train departs for Fort Augustus. The rest of the train will comprise of, two sleeping cars, a three compartment brake and a 1st/3rd composite. All Gresley bow ended stock. These coaches will belong to J.W. the station master at Drumnadrochit.

The next shot is of the as yet unfinished Southern region loco "Tangmere" heading south towards Bath Queens Square (changed from Green Park) from Fort Augustus hauling the mid-day 'Pennines Express'. This kit is not in the easy build bracket and Neil is on a sharp learning curve, two steps forward and three back. This will soon be done so that he can start work on building the 9 or 10 Bullied coach kits needed for the 'Atlantic Coast Express'.

So now there are five stations on this line, plus a branch line to Tilbrook from Canham Junction and also a dock yard just north of, and connected to, Castlegarry's goods head shunt. Also a hidden coal mine and storage roads. All this is in the next shed up from Castlgarry. Now, with these extentions the operating potential is enormous.

Another project has been the construction of a short train of tourist stock comprising of a buffet car, an articulated pair of open thirds and a brake third. All with fully fitted interiors. This train will convey holiday makers to and from the Highlands.

The first photo' shows the s/h G-5 No 7308 coming into Canham Junction from Tilbrook.

The next shot shows the same train in platform 2 waiting for the starter signal to come off so it can be away to Drumnadrochit with a holiday special.

I was given a brass kit of a G.W.R shunter's truck, which when assembled came in very useful coupled to the Bath station pilot, as there were no vacuum or steam pipes to interfere with connecting 3-link couplings.

Above are 2 shots of this truck on trials at Canham with the F-7.

The last weeks of April '08 I spent in this end shed fixing a circular baseboard made up of s/h flush fitting doors to accommodate a 1 in 70 rising gradient of 4ft 6in radius curves. These curves were laid using one of R.H. Wood's metal templates. To eliminate buffer locking on the reverse curve, I've used a solid bar fixed underneath the coach ends, and Brian has used buck eye couplings. When the track has been tweaked to get rid of highs and lows owing to heavy handed nailing down derailments should be a thing of the past as only short wheel base loco's like Drummond 4-4-0's etc. will work north of Fort Augustus. Also this passing station will have a hand operated turntable capable of turning an A-4.

The only other mod. or afterthought was to add 22in to the left end of the dock board so that the long siding will now be for the boat train. The headshunt was also extended by the same amount.

We end with the V-4 at Castlegarry.

THE FENLAND "O" GAUGE GROUP

The club layout, as stated earlier, is loosely based on Bath Green Park. The station name prior to nationalisation in 1948 was according to Bradshaws timetables, Bath Queens Square but to the locals just Bath Midland. Correct operation would see Midland trains pulling into Bath and changing to Southern loco's before heading for the south coast on the Somerset & Dorset Joint. This gives the club members a chance to run all regions stock. The only drawback is that there is no fiddle yard as we are outside the shed in the middle of a roadway. With the influx of extra traffic from the Scottish end of the line there is not enough siding space, so where the dotted line is on the track plan a new fan of sidings will be added. Four if possible.

When operating with the privately owned layouts in the other rooms there are two rakes of assorted suburban stock and two rakes of express coaches. One of these is the repainted 'Silver Jubilee' now running as the 'Pennines Express' and the other is made up of Gresley bow ended coaches including the articulated restaurant set. There is now a four coach rake of Tourist stock for the boat train from Drumnadrochit to Castlegarry docks and the night sleeper plus the mail coach to Bath. Various push-pull units and railcars appear all over the place. On the freight side a rake of 18 coal wagons, with removable loads, to Bath and up to 20 box vans in the opposite direction. These return empty. Not forgetting the Bath to Tilbrook timber train. The breakdown train runs as and when required.

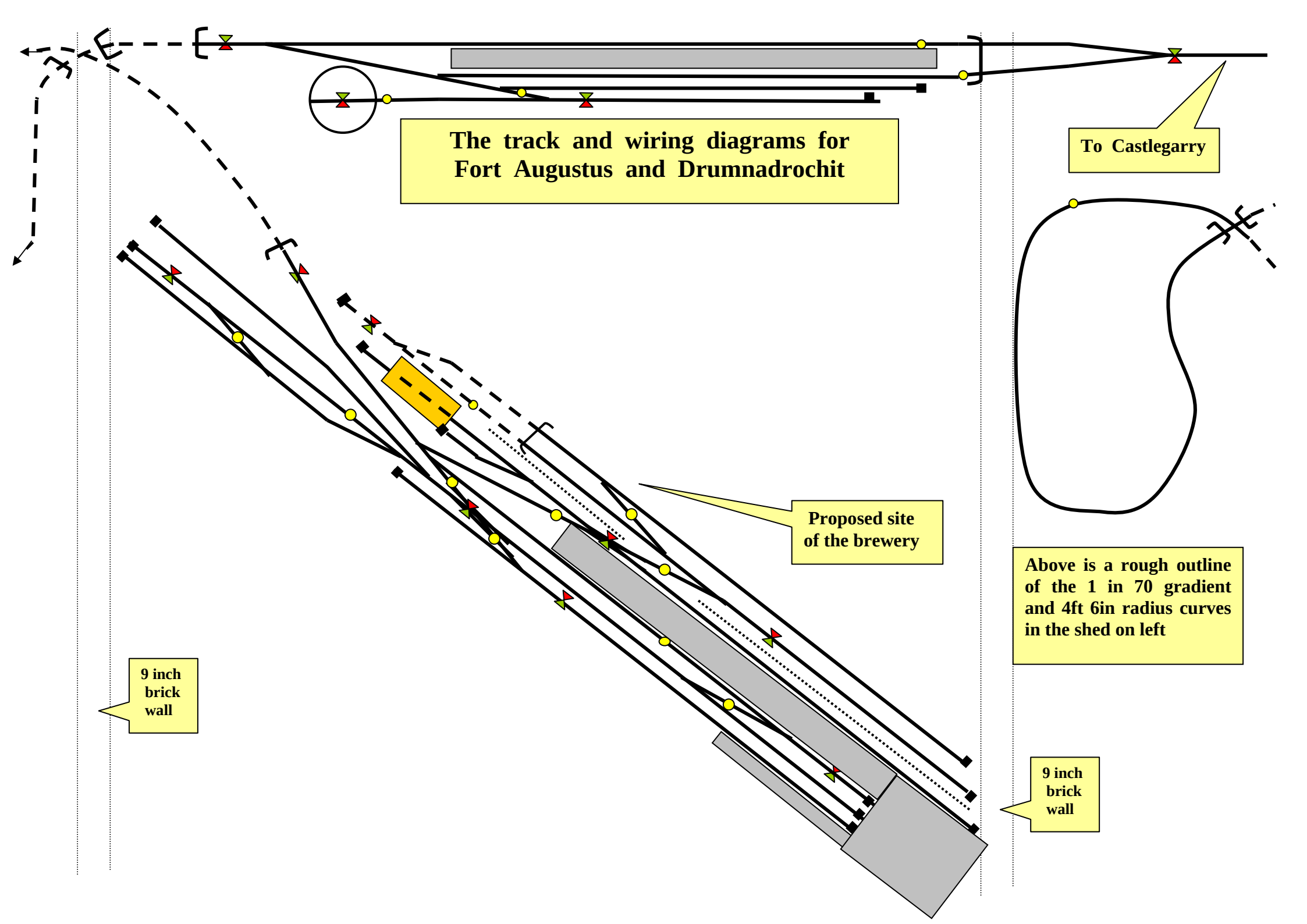
With all this extra track and eight stations in five different sheds the minimum number of operators is five, one to each shed. The maximum would be ten. As there are empty sheds between the station sheds, the only sounds heard are the bell codes and baby alarm systems when things go haywire.

The sequence timetable will have to be up-dated to accommodate all these extra movements.

The privately owned Drumnadrochit room has been dual wired, analogue and digital. So at the flick of a switch it is compatible to the rest of the system. The wiring in the change over sections has been done so that no A/C current can be mixed with our D/C when Brian is running his digital equipped loco's.

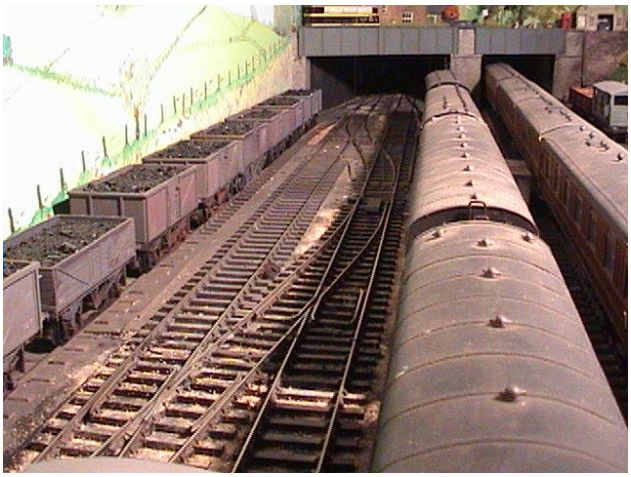
At the last count there was 120ft of double track between Bath and Castlegarry and 90ft of single line from Castlegarry to the highland town of Drumnadrochit with passing loop at Fort Augustus. The Tilbrook branch has 36ft and the docks another 20ft.

Operation is to sequence rather than time owing to the condensing of the tracks in the hidden sections between stations. Up until now we have not had a full running session so I don't know how long a days running will take. It used to be about four hours. Also if nothing goes amiss there is no spoken contact between any of the five rooms. Just like being in a real signal box in the middle of the moors.


The track and wiring diagrams for Fort Augustus and Drumnadrochit
To Castlegarry
Proposed site of the brewery
Above is a rough outline of the 1 in 70 gradient and 4ft 6in radius curves in the shed on left
9 inch brick wall
9 inch brick wall

Since April '08 the 4ft 6in radius reverse loop between Drum' and Fort Augustus has had 18in of straight track fitted to eliminate buffer locking on the reverse part of the curve, plus an equal amount on the other side. This now works much better.

It's now July '11 and I'm sorry to say that there has been no activity whatsoever in the scenery departments of both Drum' or Fort Augustus. The turntable is not finished and no ballasting done anywhere.



Both crossovers.

In the Dock room shed I made a trailing cross over so that loco's arriving in platform 2, after automatically uncoupling their trains, run forward and then reverse into platform 3. These are fitted with Peco point motors and worked from Castlegarry control panel. Another kick back siding was added to the line between the docks and Castlegarry so that both rooms could be shunted without interfering with each other.

The facing crossover.

I acquired 5 Peco turnouts complete with H & M point motors plus many yards of track for £10. The only problem was lifting it all from an unwanted layout. It was then that I decided to lay a facing crossover to the left of the trailing one so that trains from Drum' could enter platform 2, while a train to Drum' waited in platform 3. These are also electrically operated from Castlegarry. This doesn't happen very often, as more often than not, there is no one at that end of the line.

The de-mountable milk tanker being emptied.

Going back to Canham a low relief dairy has been planted at the back of the dairy siding, or platform four. Pipe work, coal bunker and tall chimney have been added, plus a (forest in a box) tree to disguise the fact that it's low relief.

Now to Bath. The station has now got an overall roof made of lift-off-able sections of budgie cage wire and a Midland style fence along the length of platform 1. This was done to prevent club members using it as a table for placing stock on running nights.

Another view of Canham dairy.

Club member Bob Holman and myself decided to make a gas works utilising the unused 3-way point on the goods head shunt. This 11ft x 18in

board has 4 long sidings, and one with a kick back siding to a large southern region goods shed that's operated by capstan or a chain from a loco' on the adjacent track. This part of the layout is about finished scenically.

The southern region goods shed.

The entry to the gas works showing the stable.

The brewery opposite has had extensive updates, including fencing, offices, coal yard and a new entrance arch through the building.

The up-dated brewery.

Going back to the dock room another point has been laid for a coal mine, on the opposite side of the shed to the docks. This leads over a hinged lifting piece to 3 sidings, 2 lines go under the screens and the other goes over a weighbridge and then under a hopper for taking away dirt and stones from the screens.

The hinged lifting piece plus the pill box.

Weigh bridge and screens.

The pit head gear and the winding house.

Then I made the winding house from ¼ ply, brick paper and card. The roof slates are all thin card stuck on one at a time. The same method of building was used for the weighbridge.

The winding house.

Going back to the coal mine again the screens were made of a Meccano frame covered with thick cardboard from a very large box. This was then covered with corrugated card from the insides of a Skytrex wagon box to represent asbestos sheets. I purchased a Bachman 4mm scale pit head gear that looked about right. So I made it 5 inches taller and it now looks like '0' gauge.

Bob said, "You've got the dairy, docks and coalmine, and we've got the brewery and gas works, what you want now is an oil terminal". I said a rude word, and then said, where? Two days later I came across a 2ft x 6in square of ¼ in ply, with 1½in x 1in edging on three sides.

So I fitted 3 bent pieces of Meccano strip left over from making the screens to the plain side so it would hang from the Dexion frame under the storage board so that it hung down level with the water line on the dock board.

The dock estuary.

The parts that are not water, the road bridge, oil terminal dock and the rail bridge supports are all made to lift off or slide out so that the ply river bed can slide out to give me access to the room corner by standing behind the fixed rail bridge.

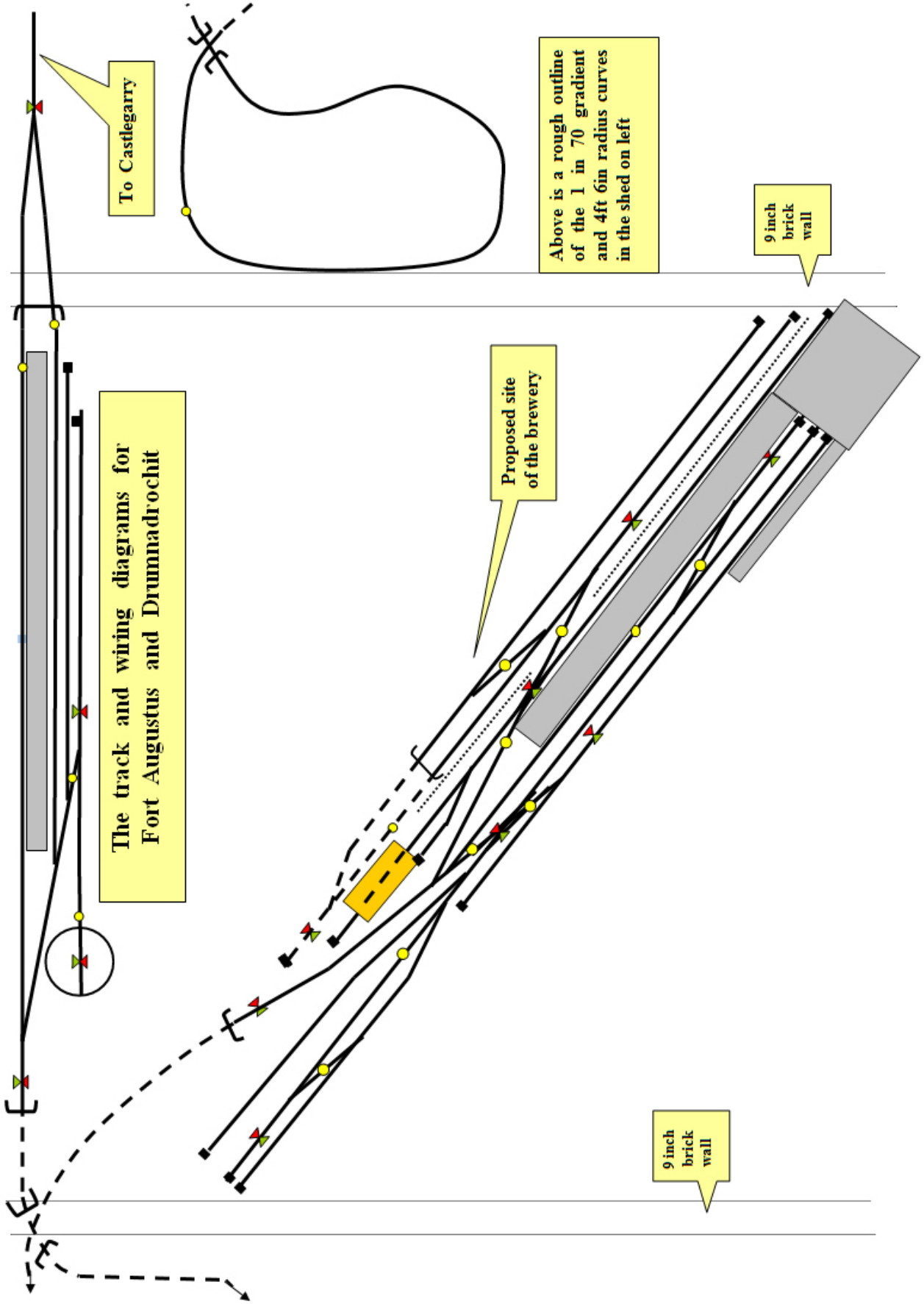
2½ years ago I ordered 5 MTH coaches, and when they finally arrived a couple of months ago, instead of assorted LMS corridor coaches I ended up with four 3rd opens and 1 parcels. Now I'm waiting for two Br/3rds and two $1^{st}/3^{rd}$ composites.

'Leander' with a north bound express.

I've just taken delivery of an LMS Jubilee 'Leander', and an LNER B1, 'Roedeer'. Today's date, Wednesday, November 16^{th} 2011.

B-1 'Roedeer' with tourist stock on a local.

This means that now, I can take a proper train into Bath Midland. The B-1 on the tourist stock will go to the south coast via Queens Square. The 2-P and LMS brake van will be on the 12 coke wagons taking coal from the north to Bath gas works and returning with coke, and 'Leander' with a rake of LMS 57ft coaches will not look out of place in Bath Midland or Queens Square.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MY ‘O’ GAUGE STORY

A busy day at Canham

This is a personal view of the past forty years of 7mm/ft modelling by me, the author, John Castle. Guild No 2528. The pictures were taken on a memory stick in my Sony digital 8 camcorder and if anyone is to blame for me trying to be a writer, please blame my good friend Jack Ray whose encouragement when I started to do video films was most helpful. I’ll end up on a bright note, if I’ve upset anyone in this story, hard luck.