Toy Trains, and Model Railways

The Clockwork Era, 1952-55

The genesis of a lifetime's hobby was, as usual at that time, a Hornby 'O' gauge clockwork train set, purchased probably for my birthday in 1952, or at Xmas later that year. This comprised a dark red 0-4-0 tank locomotive and two 4-wheeled carriages, running on jointed tinplate track which I took great pleasure in routing sinuously around the table and chairs, on the floor of our living room at Fenton Avenue, Staines, getting under everyone's feet.

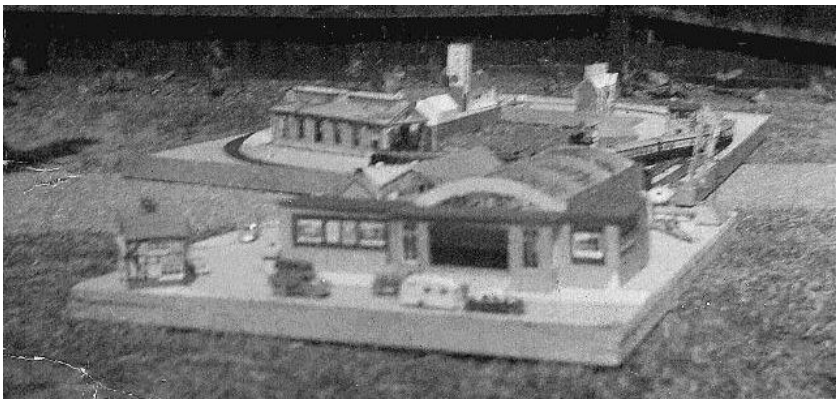
This system was expanded to include various goods wagons, a level crossing, signals, a tinplate station, a further coach, and lastly an additional engine of the same 0-4-0 type, but this time enamelled in black livery. A broken mainspring, no doubt due to over-enthusiastic winding, was a problem requiring fiddly replacement by my father.

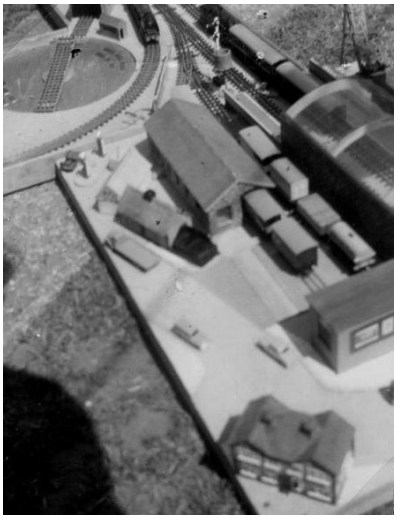
This collection was probably sold to the Atkins at no 24, who had twin boys a few years younger than me. They also had all my old 'Dinky Toys' which too would have been worth something these days! However they were probably very 'well-used' and without their boxes, so perhaps not.

"OO" gauge electric trains 1956-58

The replacement for my 'O' gauge system came in the form of a Hornby Dublo "Royal Scot" train set. I think this cost the princely sum of 63 shillings (£3.15) at a time when the average take-home pay was around £9 per week. Nowadays a similar set would be around £120, so the relative amounts are not greatly different.

It comprised the 3-rail electric locomotive 46232 "Duchess of Montrose" in lined-out British Railways green livery, with two tinplate LMS corridor coaches in red & cream colours, a composite and a brake (these have survived! – picture right). I can still recall the sheer joy of finding this set in my stocking on Christmas morning 1955, compounded by the unveiling of a new layout later in the day. Dad showed considerable foresight in several ways with this; despite the disadvantage of the 3-rail system, the Hornby products were far more realistic and well made compared to their competitors Triang, whose early ventures into the use of plastic were clumsy-looking and somewhat brittle. Also he bought Wrenn flexible track and points, much neater-looking than the Hornby solid-base sectional track. The Wrenn track used a tough fibre sleeper base unit with metal eyelet chairs gripping the steel rails, and was rather similar in structure to the later universal 'Peco' products but somewhat heavier in appearance. The plain track came in yard lengths. Dad made up a baseboard approx. 6 ft x 4 ft using 1" x 1" timber for the framework, faced with the new 'Sundeala' softboard (made locally at Sunbury, and obtained direct from the factory) in the approved





manner, to carry my first ‘proper’ layout. This is shown in the photographs, outdoors on a fine summer day in our back garden at Staines.

Normally it was stored leaning up against the dining room wall, between the window and the sideboard, and had to be tediously set up, usually on the dining-room table, for an operating session. I recall we used Carbon Tetrachloride for cleaning the rails, obtained in a small bottle from the ironmongers C.A. Noble in the Broadway; it’s a good thing with hindsight that mum & dad had given up smoking by then!

The pictures were taken in 1958, and by then the original board had been extended to provide a large terminal station. All the splendid buildings, the station, a goods shed and the engine shed, were made up from good-quality 1/8” thick plywood by my father, using his treadle-operated fretsaw, following “Hobbies” patterns, and covered with brick, stone and tile “Bilteezi” building papers which were similar to the later “Superquick” products.

Most of the stock, track and accessories were bought from Hamblings, Allan Brett Cannon (ABC) of London Bridge, or City Models near Liverpool Street station, all close to Dad’s office in the City of London. The controller was an ‘ABC’ product, incorporating an ex-WD rheostat from a ‘Spitfire’ bomber and a large transformer, both of which components are still in regular use to this day.

The photos also show a heavy cast-metal “Dinky Toys” Goods Yard Crane, the only survivor from the ‘O’ gauge system that was suitable for re-use. There are several of the then-new ‘OO’ scale Dinky and “Matchbox” road vehicles, and an ‘Airfix’ plastic Country Inn kit, together with several other small homemade cardboard buildings. The turntable is built up from plywood, and the bright metal contact strips for various sidings running off it are visible.

By this time, additional rolling stock had been added, including various tinplate wagons, a pair of maroon suburban coaches, and a Hornby ‘N2’ class 0-6-2 tank locomotive in lined black BR livery. Soon to appear were a BR class 4MT 2-6-4 tank loco (80xxx class), and a Bo-Bo diesel type D8000 (later class 20) at Christmas 1958, soon after the latter type had made its debut on British Railways and already familiar to us at Euston station. All these were ‘Hornby Dublo’ products, the diesel loco being one of their first ventures into plastic technology for the body, and well acclaimed for the level of fine detail.

A permanent layout 1959-61

With my continuing enthusiasm, Dad then embarked upon construction of a permanent layout around the walls of my bedroom. All the track was first carefully lifted from the old boards, and these were then re-arranged and extended to provide a main station area about 2’ wide all along the window wall, extensions along the far side and the door wall, and a narrow lift-out section across the centre of the room (over the bed) to join these and form a continuous circuit. This new layout included many points, remotely operated from an ‘ABC’ lever-frame unit by means of the surface “wire in brass tube” method. There was also a tunnel in one corner with scenery above, but no photographs have survived, and few other details of this layout are recalled. It lasted about 3 years, from late 1958 to 1961, and underwent at least one major re-

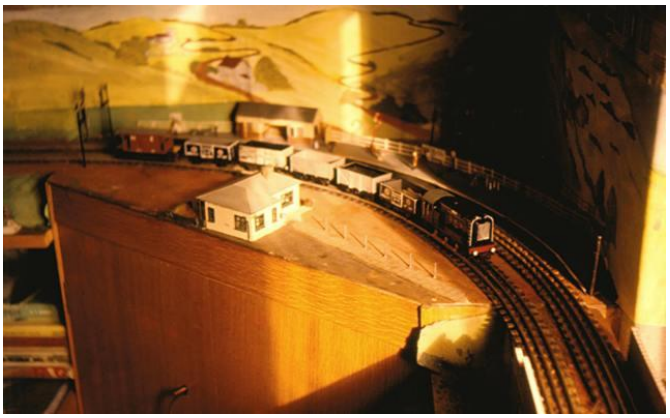
arrangement in this period. It was amazing how much was packed into what was quite a small room, about 9'0" by 7'6", already including a 3'6" bed and a tall wardrobe unit. This was also hand-built by Dad, painted grey, and included dedicated drawer storage space for all the railway stock, and my extensive "Meccano" set, at the bottom. Frequent visitors for operating sessions were school friends Douglas Watts, Christopher Clements and Nigel Walters. Nigel had his own extensive 'Triang' layout at home in Grosvenor Road, including the impressive 'Continental' US diesels and silver 'Vista-Dome' cars. These had a 2-rail system with coarse-scale plastic wheels and would not run on my tracks. About this time, I also got very keen on buses for a while, and made numerous models to approx 'OO' scale from card, and a large garage to put them in modelled on the London Transport one at Staines. Gran used to call them "my menagerie".

Also about this time I had constructed a larger-scale model of a London General "B" type bus in plywood and card which I was encouraged to submit to the junior modeller's section of the Model Engineer Exhibition in London towards the end of 1961, where it won a diploma.....

The "Keswick & Derwentwater Railway" 1961-64

During 1961 dad decided to completely rebuild my bedroom once again, and this time constructed an impressive range of fitted furniture using the newly available oak-veneered chipboard products. A 2' wide by 6' long unit with 8 large drawers and a central cupboard was fitted along the door wall, and carried a new main station layout on top, on plain ½" chipboard. The original 4 spindly legs proved unsatisfactory under all this weight, and a sturdy "underframe" with six oak legs replaced these. One of the drawers was adapted to contain the railway control system, with a flexible wiring loom enabling it to be closed up when not in use, a very neat arrangement. The main wiring junction box was located in the cupboard. Dad brought home a lot of offcuts of GPO telephone multicore cable from his office, with wires of many different colour combinations. Little round low-voltage on-off switches were obtainable from Woolworth's for 9d each and many of these were used on the control panel for section switching.

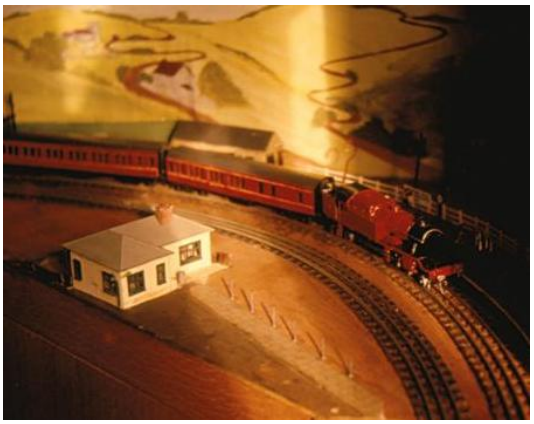
A bookcase unit was placed under the window, with a triangular-shaped low-height wardrobe in the north-east corner, the railway boards continuing round on top. A further long bookshelf ran beside the bed, which was built into a bedhead unit containing a small station area above. Somewhat later, a lift-out corner section was made to fit across the door opening and complete a continuous circuit, but this was inconvenient as the door had first to be lifted off its rising-butt hinges and stowed out on the landing. Access to my bedroom was then by crawling under this board!



The new layout re-used all the old track and equipment, plus many new items. It was to have a definite theme and identity for the first time, the "Keswick & Derwentwater Railway". Because of the wide variety of stock then owned, the only way to achieve a plausible entity was to specify a "preservation" operation, inspired by the early activities of the Bluebell Railway in Sussex. In this way an excuse was found to accommodate the many different locomotives and liveries. An entirely fictitious "history" was also concocted, and typed out by my school friend Martin Bryan around 1962; this booklet describes the layout fully, and has various track plans etc. This however gives no clue as to why the location of Keswick was chosen; we had no family connections in the area, and were not to visit on holiday until 1965.

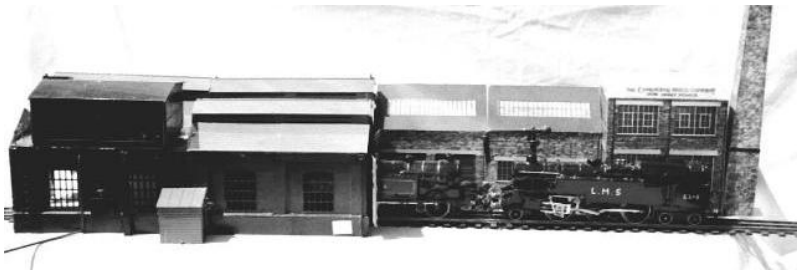
The layout remained initially as 3-rail, with the Wrenn track, the excuse being that the preservation society had electrified the line in order to run an old Mersey Railway electric unit! With availability of the new plastic sheet modelling medium "Plastikard" and suitable solvents around 1961, together with a good range of "Humbrol" enamel paints, easy scratch building and modification of locomotives and carriages became possible. While one of the Hornby N2 class 0-6-2 tanks was retained as such, now repainted into the attractive two-tone green Great Northern Railway livery as no 1598, another was altered into an L&NWR "Coal Tank" in lined black livery, numbered 1378. To complement the GNR engine (or so I thought, though hindsight shows they were not actually built until 1925), the short suburban tinplate coaches were rebuilt with "articulation", and the bodies given card panelling overlays and repainted as "teak" with white roofs as per the LNER quad- and quint-art sets. Unfortunately my set had only three vehicles, but the general idea looked right and ran well. To run with the L&NWR tank, a rake of three 4-wheeled carriages was constructed with card bodies on old Hornby long-wheelbase wagon underframes.

The "Duchess of Montrose" pacific, having already been repainted into LMS-style maroon, still looked quite out of place on my short, single-track branch line, so a new body was constructed from Plastikard, and a bit of copper water pipe for the boiler, to transform this into a most elegant Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway 4-6-4 "Baltic" tank, LMS number 11111 (easy to paint!), the tender being discarded. This strange but impressive loco ran with the LMS corridor coaches, by now rebuilt with card sides in maroon livery, and supplemented in September 1963 by 3 or 4 of the newest Hornby B.R. "mark 1" carriages, also in maroon. These had scale-length underframes, now with plastic roofs and ends, but retaining the richly coloured printed tinplate sides, so the clear window glazing appeared almost flush. I still consider these to be among the best ready-to-run coaching stock models ever produced.



The most drastic identity transplant concerned the D8000 diesel. The plastic body was cut down to the frames, lengthened, and given a new top resembling the boxy

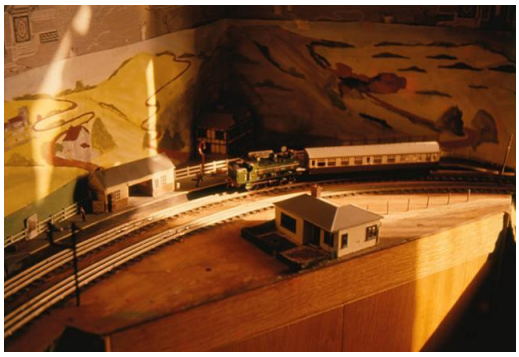
Southern Railway electric locomotive 20003, painted black and silver. When it was realised this should have 6-wheeled bogies, another quick change was made, the chassis now sitting beneath a Furness Railway "steam railmotor" with clerestory roof, painted in that gorgeous livery of royal blue and ivory with gold lining. A trailer car was also built to accompany it, and by 1963 a centre coach was added. This was now no doubt well beyond the theoretical haulage capability of the steam railmotor unit, and one side (only) of the set was repainted LMS maroon, thus becoming the aforementioned "Mersey Railway electric unit". What fun we had in those days, when strict prototype accuracy took a definite second place to expediency when it came to providing as great a variety of operational stock as possible at minimal cost!



In comparison, the BR 2-6-4 tank loco escaped relatively unscathed, new plastic tank-side overlays being fitted to create an LMS-black liveried Fairburn version, numbered 2245, remaining as such to this day. Carefully filed-down side rods improved the appearance no end, on all the locomotives. The 2-6-4T is shown here in company with the "L&NWR" tank.....

And, below, as it is today, still a good runner after 53 years.....

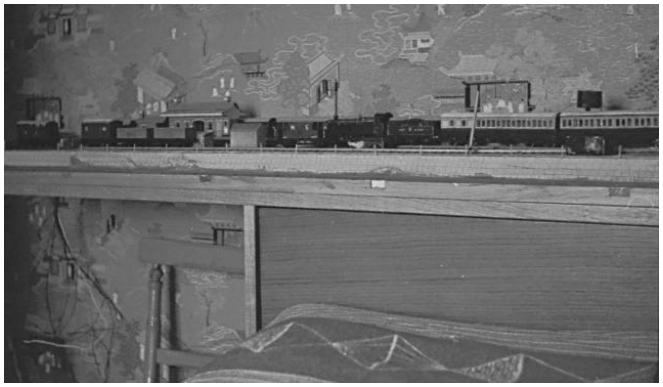
A GWR pannier tank locomotive was purchased from Hatton's of Liverpool by mail order in 1961, but on its very first run caught fire, with actual flames spouting forth from the motor! Prolonged correspondence from dad failed to secure adequate redress, and another of the reliable Hornby N2 chassis was eventually obtained. Suitably cut down, and the pannier body cut down to fit, this became a 20xx class (2058) with open-backed cab, and a rather large motor-block protruding. The body also sat rather too high on the chassis. A "Triang" WR brown-and-cream main-line coach was obtained to match, and modified at one end to resemble one of the BR 1954-built auto train trailers (now I know the 20xx class was not auto-fitted…..)



These 1962 photos show many of the layout features. There are now several of the "Airfix" plastic buildings, the loco shed and water tank, a Midland-Railway style signal box, a detached house, shop, garage, and bungalow. The old "Country Inn" model is now at "Hunter's Inn", the intermediate station, whose waiting hut is a printed card "Bilteezi" kit. The factory buildings are also by "Bilteezi".

The terraced houses are from balsa wood sheet, based on those in "Coronation Street", which started on ITV channel-9 television (in black & white of course) as long ago as 1960!

The Georgian style houses in façade form only behind the main station area are from stout card faced with fine sandpaper. There is a rather lurid water-colour backscene, and some very strange "Chinese-pattern" wallpaper!.....



Keswick signal box is a model in card and Perspex sheet based on a Great Central Railway timber prototype featured in the "Railway Modeller" magazine about this time. The card I used then came from Dad's employer, being formal invitation cards to the firms' annual dinner-dance in London, about 6" x 5", of superb quality and so in constant demand for modelling purposes. Most of the signals are hand-built from bits of spare rail and wire, with card arms, and are non-operational, but there is an early "Ratio" plastic GWR bracket, and an old Hornby Dublo metal home/distant from the original 1955 layout. The "platform indicator" and "colour light" signals were built around Woolworth's' 3.5v torch bulbs, grossly over scale of course. The operating sequence was controlled by a "programme machine", consisting of a rotating cocoa tin driven by an old mains gramophone motor via Meccano gearing. The tin was covered by paper overlays with slots cut out, through which spring-wire fingers contacted the drum to supply power to the individual lights. This contraption worked well when new, but was difficult to keep clean enough to provide good electrical contacts.

The Wrenn track is by now laid on paper felt underlay strip (which was sold in sheet form for putting under linoleum floor covering) for quiet running. It is ballasted with dried (used) tealeaves, the preparation process for which involved much mess and heating up in the oven, sometimes delaying the family cooking. I'm sure this must have been another "Railway Modeller" magazine idea, in the absence then of any more suitable affordable materials. The platforms and roads are coated with glued sawdust, painted dark grey. The coal in the staithes is real, pinched from the coal shed and smashed up with a hammer on Dad's workbench. Suitable ferns were collected and used as trees and bushes, after spraying with varnish. They lasted a surprisingly long time!

Regular visitors from school around 1963 were Paul Chamberlain, Nigel Walters, John Squier, Stephen Sheppard, Barry Staplehurst and Martin Bryan, all Strode's contemporaries. Some stock changes are seen by then. There is a diesel shunter, Hornby with a powerful ring-field motor, repainted firstly into LMS black as no. 7031, then later into "Keswick & Derwentwater Railway" green with gold "Letraset" transfer lettering. The "L&NWR" 0-6-2 tank is transformed yet again, into some semblance of a GER N7 class, resplendent in Royal Blue livery, to run with the suburban set, by now "de-articulated" and rebuilt on its original bogies for greater operational flexibility.

The photograph above at Derwentwater station shows what appears to be a GWR 43xx 'mogul' 2-6-0. This was a non-motorised model, just posed for the occasion. A couple of years or so before I had bought and constructed one of the new "Kitmaster" GWR 61xx 2-6-2 tank loco plastic kits, but soon tired of having the same model as everyone else. With the aid of a "City of Truro" boiler, cab and tender from the same source, donated by Paul Chamberlain who only wanted the chassis parts, the 43xx was born (note that I had this idea long before the West Somerset Railway!).....

The tender body was built up on top of the original using Plastikard. Nothing was ever wasted in those days; the 61xx boiler, tanks, cab and bunker later provided a GWR 56xx body for one of the Hornby N2 0-6-2 tank chassis, which survives to this day.....

The coaches with the 43xx are also an enigma, as there seems to be more stock by now than there should be (and for the available siding space). The answer is of course that this is also the LNER set, on which one side only has been stripped of its card panelling and repainted in brown and cream!

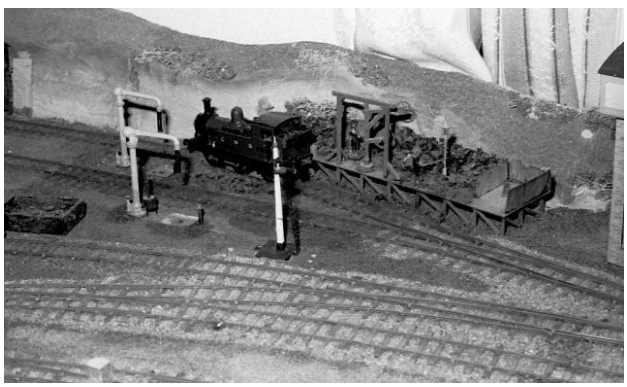
Also lurking almost unseen in the Derwentwater picture is a Kitmaster L&YR "pug" 0-4-0 saddle tank in light green livery. This was motorised, presumably using someone's conversion kit, but was not a good runner with its very short wheelbase due to poor electrical pick-up over point frog gaps. The five plastic mineral wagons are "Airfix" kits; there are also 1 or 2 Trix wagons, and some of the old Hornby tinplate ones are re-bodied in thin, scribed plywood, or have printed-card "private owner" sides stuck on.

The Dinky and Matchbox road vehicles remain, and are joined by 3 card LGOC type open-top buses, produced as a job-lot batch with help from Paul Chamberlain, who then decided he did not want any of them! A new water tower was made in card, based on the SR one at Axminster featured in the RM magazine.

Encouraged by my father and friends, two major changes to the layout occurred during 1964. Early in the year we converted everything to 2-rail operation at last. All the locomotive chassis were taken to Allen Brett Cannon in London, who converted them by drilling out and bushing the wheels on one side, a standard service offered at that time at low cost. They also had to insulate the cylinders on the Duchess and 2-6-4T chassis. The track was a simple job, the centre rail just being pulled out and the eyelet chairs pressed down flush with the sleepers. The opportunity was taken to paint the running rail sides and sleeper tops in matt brown, giving a much more realistic appearance. The necessary re-wiring was altogether trickier, especially for the points and the scissors crossover unit. Metal coach and wagon wheels on the older stock were replaced by plastic, newer items already having these when purchased. This highly successful conversion opened up the possibility of new locomotives – the first was a "K's" GWR Dean Goods 0-6-0 kit, a nice runner which is still in use today, though recently needing rebushing and re-motoring after nearly 40 years of heavy wear.

Going Great Western – the Cardigan branch (extension) 1964-73

A visit to Swindon Works and the new museum in December 1963 brought about the second major change - the "Great Westernization" - whereby "Keswick" became "Cardigan" and anything which did not fit or could not be modified to this theme was consigned to storage. This certainly enabled more running freedom as sidings were much less cluttered up with stock. The Dean Goods and old 20xx pannier were joined by the 56xx conversion mentioned above. By now the Hornby 0-6-2T mechanisms were becoming very worn, and the best parts of my GNR and GER tanks were cannibalised



to provide one good chassis for the new GW loco.

More K's kits were added, a 14xx 0-4-2 tank, a 44xx 2-6-2T which was incorrectly numbered as 4551, and an 8750 variant of pannier tank. All these were unfortunately finished in a high-gloss varnish, a fad at the time. All three models still exist, but with rebuilt and repainted bodies in a much more sober style. The pannier, having sounded like an old lawn mower for over 30 years, is now re-motored and soldiers on very quietly. The 45xx also had some initial mechanical problems, and would only run smoothly after the addition of a heavy brass flywheel which ensured tremendous pulling power. However once it was under way very good judgement was needed to stop it accurately, as an over-run was likely to demolish everything in its path! The 14xx was certainly the best runner of this bunch but had a tendency to waddle from side to side, cured by restricting the side play of the rear pony truck, and introducing light springing to it.

The Duchess / "Baltic" chassis with its Walschaerts valve gear was totally unsuitable for any conversion, and has remained stored away ever since. The LMS 2-6-4T was allowed to run on occasionally alongside the GWR locos. The 0-6-0 diesel shunter chassis was considered for an outside-framed pannier or saddle tank, but the very large motor block precluded any sensible conversion.

The former D80xx / 20003 / electric unit motor coach underwent its final and most drastic conversion, to GW diesel railcar W21 in around 1967; a card body on soldered-rail frames, with planed-oak roof and new white-metal bogie sides. Only the motor, bogie blocks and wheels now remained of the 1958 original; it still runs and looks well.

A first, and for a long time only, attempt at scratch-building a locomotive resulted in the impressive GW heavy freight type 2-8-2T no 7204 in 1971. It has a soldered brass body, Romford wheels and K's motor & gears. With all wheels flanged it was found unsuitable for the sharp curves of the "Cardigan" layout, and of course unsuitable as a locomotive type for the later Bala layout, so is even now barely run-in!

A final loco acquisition, and equally unsuitable, came also in 1971 in the form of a Hornby Dublo "Castle" class 4-6-0, repainted in GW livery as "Dartmouth Castle". It was obtained for the bargain price of £5 when the University College of North Wales Railway Society model layout was disbanded after its one and only exhibition that summer.

Of the coaching stock, a card clerestory body was built onto one of the original Hornby main-line coach chassis, but did not last long, suffering severe warpage. Improved techniques were used to convert two of the plastic-roofed later Hornby vehicles to Collett corridor stock. These looked fine with their dead-matt dark grey painted roofs, compared to the then almost universal modellers' preference for gleaming white; they are seen in the Staines Model Railway Society "first running session" photographs at Staines Town Hall in late 1965. Another of these vehicles was simply repainted from maroon to chocolate & cream, to become GWR suburban third 4047. The 4-wheeled LNWR coach became a similar GWR vehicle.

From 1965-67 more coaches were scratch-built. Auto-trailer 187 (replacing the old "Triang" one) became the subject of a short article in "Model Railway Constructor" magazine during 1966, when Chris Leigh had just started as a junior assistant editor, and needed a "page-filler" at very short notice one month. It was photographed before the paint was even dry!

A 70-foot "Concertina" brake third, no 3487, was a real challenge, as was a new clerestory corridor brake third 2086 replacing the earlier failed attempt.....

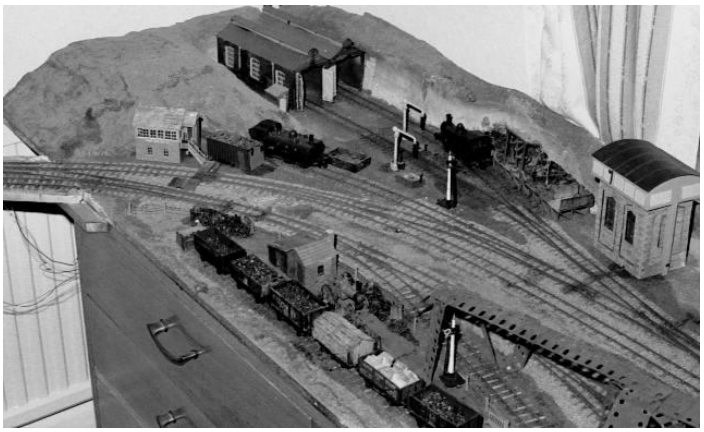
Finally, during 1968-70 all the remaining old Hornby chassis were rebodied, some being lengthened also; a total of 11 vehicles including a Collett full-brake, a set of three "City stock" close-coupled suburbans in maroon lake livery, five Collett

main-line bow-ended corridors, and a “Centenary” stock saloon third. All of these are still running, in fine condition.

Improvements to the layout were also progressed during 1965-68, as and when “A” levels and then college breaks allowed. All of the old heavy Wrenn track and pointwork was at last gradually replaced by handbuilt items, retaining the same basic layout. Copper-clad PCB strip was not yet generally available, so the construction was a base strip of paper underfelt, balsa sleepers (pre-stained with Colron dark-brown wood dye) laid in a pool of glue, carefully ballasted with “Budgie Grit” and left to dry hard. Brass pins were inserted every third sleeper or so, and scale-size code-60 nickel-silver bullhead rails soldered to these. A lot of work, to the accompaniment of “Radio Luxemburg” on my new Bush transistor radio, or “Beatles” tapes on a Philips “portable” reel-to-reel recorder. Unfortunately, when used with chipboard baseboards this track construction gave somewhat noisy running and was prone to buckling on hot summer days, needing frequent attention. The noise aspect was capitalised upon by filing “v-groove” rail joints at scale intervals, so that the newer stock with metal wheels made a most realistic sound.

Home-made signals were constructed using tapered oak posts and “K’s” white-metal arms. They were operated by old 24v DC army-surplus solenoids, obtained from one of the then many electrical “junk-shops” on London’s Tottenham Court Road.

An elaborate new stone station building was constructed for “Cardigan Town” based on an amalgam of those at Brecon and Talybont-on-Usk, modified to suit the site. I have just noticed the unfortunate GWR open-topped bus lying on its side in this photo (right) after more than 40 years!.....



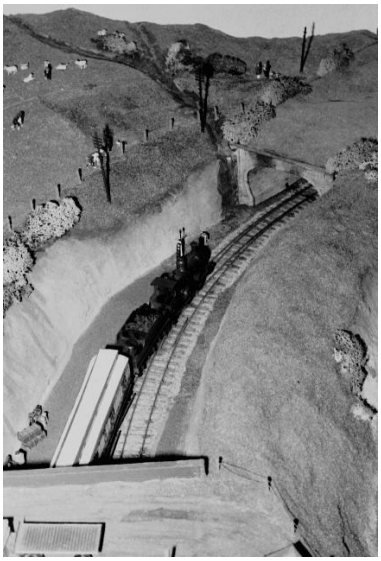
The signal boxes were based on two standard GWR designs, the brick one from Loudwater, and the later hipped-roof wooden style a mirror-image version of that at Colnbrook, both local prototypes

handy for detailed measurement and photography.

The former is shown in the photo above right, where I forgot to remove the protective “Meccano” strips from over the signals at bottom right after taking off the polythene dust sheets.

I really must get around to doing something about those warped windows and buckled aluminium foil gutters, but I guess they don't look too bad these days after 45 years.

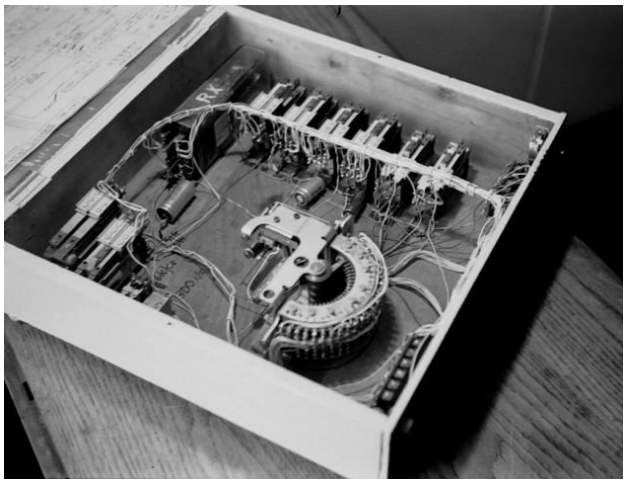
The intermediate halt also got an impressive new station house, modelled on Berwyn near Llangollen, whose half-timbered folly was then derelict and deteriorating fast.....



Station and lineside signs were made photo-graphically in the college darkroom at Bangor, and copies were sold commercially for a while by Chris Leigh, until the much more realistic (and expensive) etched-brass versions took over.

One of the photographs shows an intruder upon the Great Western scene, a Dinorwic Quarries Railway workmen's coach, featured in "Model Railway Constructor" during 1967. Unknowingly though, it was perhaps not so inappropriate as the real ones were said to be derived from a design for the "Whitland & Taf Vale Railway", which later became the GWR Cardigan branch! It has to be said also that the model "00" gauge of 16.5mm was also closer to the Dinorwic 4ft gauge than to the standard gauge it claimed to represent (that was a good excuse, wasn't it!).

Lastly, a note about the layout control system "Archibald" developed during this period. The central feature was an ex-GPO mechanical "Uniselector" switch of the type then common in telephone exchanges, modified from its original 50 x 4-way to 25-position by 8-way contacts, and driven from a standard mechanical telephone dial. This activated track sections, point motors and signals in various combinations, allowing 25 different "movements" to be set up. A further refinement was to activate the uniselector, the point motor power and the signals by means of electronic pulses of different frequencies recorded on tape, thereby enabling a sequence of routes to be set up in turn by starting



and stopping the tape recorder. A prototype decoder and amplifier was built by Kevin Handford and demonstrated successfully, attracting considerable interest and comment. Unfortunately the modelling magazines of the period were somewhat indisposed to the complexities of electronics, so our ideas did not reach a wider audience. "Archibald", incidentally stood for Automatic Railway Control Having In-Built Audio-Level Detection, alluding to the full version of the system.

Another "electronic" gimmick we tried around this time was using appropriate pre-recorded steam locomotive sound (from the excellent Peter Handford discs) fed into various loudspeakers placed at intervals along the back of the layout, in such a way that the sound appeared to follow the locomotive as it progressed down the track. This was done by using variable resistors (rheostats) to control the signal fed to each speaker, driven either manually or by a mechanical arrangement involving Meccano arms, gearing and old gramophone motors. After a successful trial at home, we took all the gear to the local Staines club (see separate article) and when we set it up on the much larger Staines West layout, on a quiet night with only a few members present, the effect was quite astounding (and also masked the noise from the locomotive motors). However I was most disappointed, when having set the whole thing up again ready to astonish visitors to our annual exhibition, that the sound effects were now of course totally drowned out by the general noise level emanating from the assembled throng, so that no-one appreciated what we had done at all! We evidently needed a much more powerful amplifier to take this idea any further.

Meanwhile, my much-improved layout at home was destined to have a fairly short life. The completed layout remained in my bedroom at Staines, but being away at college meant little time was spent on it. In April 1970 my parents moved to Bournemouth; the layout and all the fitted furniture supporting it was adapted to suit the back bedroom in their bungalow there, but by now I was spending even less time at home. These last photographs show this phase.....






By 1974, after I had bought a house in Llandegfan, Anglesey, my parents wanted the Bournemouth room as a guest bedroom. Everything was moved again, but this time there was no way that the layout would fit in either the new house or its garage. After a period in storage the baseboards were stripped of all re-usable items and then broken up. Most of the signals, point-motors etc, and the stock was later used on the Bala model, started at Poynton in 1979 and described in a separate article. Dad's original 1961 vintage drawer base unit became a smart and useful dining-room cabinet, reduced in width to 20" and with a new top, doing sterling service in this form until 1988, then further surviving to this very day as garage storage!

K.A. Jaggers 1997