

Watermouth

An Historic P4 Model Railway

Steve Howe

Watermouth represents a medium sized terminus of an imaginary GWR branch running south from Chard to the coast near Charmouth. Just short of the terminus on the north bank of the estuary, the branch is joined at St David's Junction by a GWR/SR joint line running down from Axminster with another branch serving the village of Kilmington. The line crosses the tidal estuary by an iron viaduct and enters Watermouth Riverside which is also assumed to have a branch running on to Watermouth Docks. The station arrangement draws inspiration from Kingsbridge, Weymouth and Kingswear. Watermouth Docks are assumed to be an embarkation port for steamers to the Continent and the track plan is designed to accommodate busy summer passenger traffic, including a daily Sleeper to London and through trains from the Midlands, London, Taunton and Exeter, as well as local branchline services.

In the Master Plan, this station lies on the bank of an estuary and a single line section on a long bridge over the river (based on the Taw bridge at Barnstaple) links it with St David's Junction. Because this bridge has a weight restriction, 'large' engines come off their trains at the Junction and go to a small MPD, whilst the train is taken on to the main terminus by a lighter locomotive. The corresponding empty stock and light engine workings should allow for a variety of interesting traffic movements.

The layout was begun over 45 years ago by the late Pat English, a long-standing member of the Falmouth Model Railway Club and represents a pioneering example of early P4 modelling. Pat was a meticulous modeller and researcher and the layout was designed to strict prototype practice.

Originally conceived as a 'U' shape with stations on either side of the room, it was later rebuilt following a house move into a 'L' shape and the bridge over the estuary and the junction station were abandoned, (This station was given to another Club member who has also since passed away and in memory of him it was re-named 'St. David's Jct.) Although never developed to a fully scenic finish, enough has survived to make a full restoration feasible, particularly since 'St David's Junction' has also since come into Club custody.

The location map which follows was found in a box of oddments when the layout was dismantled, and gives a clear indication of the geographical location of the Branch, and its relationship to the railways of the area, both real and imagined.

As will be seen from the photos, the model, even in its present form, is impressive. We hope this presentation will encourage other Cornish finescale modellers or even those further afield, to join in the project. The layout has been relocated to the Helston & Falmouth MRC's clubroom at Gunwalloe near Helston, where the detailed work of revising the outdated wiring and point control is well in hand. The layout has been completely rewired, a new control panel constructed to enable full cab control with Pictroller controllers, and Cobalt point motors installed.

For details of meetings and working sessions please contact Steve Howe at the address below:

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We hope this presentation will bring the project to a wider audience and hope we may encourage increased interest in bringing this historic layout back to life.

Location map

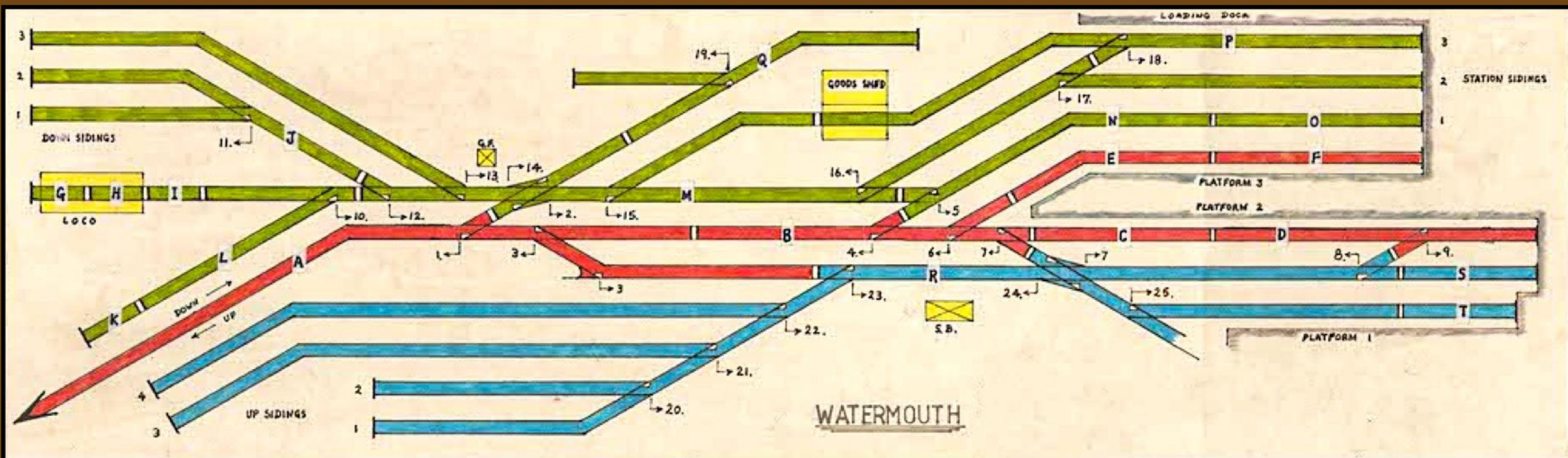
Watermouth's fictional location is on the south coast between Weymouth and Lyme Regis.

Sadly Pat left no written record of his ideas for the back-story for Watermouth, so beyond the memories of those of us who knew him, we are open to conjecture as to the size of the imagined port; the traffic the Branch generated; and the extent to which the Southern railway had running rights into the terminus.

The historical justification relating to the GWR's audacious intrusion into what is clearly LSWR territory would make interesting reading!



Schematic Diagram of Watermouth Terminus





Watermouth set up for the first time, still on the original baseboard framing, chipboard baseboards and H & M point motors from the late 1970's!

The baseboards were originally constructed on half inch chipboard and 2"x1" timber as was the custom of the time; track is fully chaired 'Brook-Smith' pattern with correct 2 bolt chairs and captures beautifully the 'flow' of the prototype. All this has withstood the years remarkably well, but as the baseboards were altered and rebuilt at various times, the depth of the baseboard members varied from board to board making setting up and dismantling unnecessarily awkward (the layout was never intended for exhibition viewing) The main baseboard framing has been replaced with new timber of consistent depth, new alignment and fixing bolts installed and new supporting frames built.

The baseboards representing the estuary and bridge connecting the two stations have been reconstructed and the entire layout measuring some 24' by 18' has been fully erected for the first time in many years in our Clubroom. A suitable cassette and stock storage system will be created to replace the original and highly complex fiddle yard that Pat constructed and which has since found a new home with a member of the Scalefour Society.



Watermouth baseboards now re-mounted on new frames. The 'flow' of the trackwork is one of the great visual assets of this layout.



The Watermouth station throat. The single line in the foreground is the approach from the long curved bridge crossing the estuary. The locomotive shed is for engines using the station on a regular basis, the servicing point across the river at the Junction is for locomotives too heavy to cross the bridge, or Southern engines whose trains terminate there.



Carriage sidings adjacent to the loco shed. The coaches are Slaters Toplights, the Dean Goods is the Finney kit.



The dropped frames for the estuary boards. The ruling radius for the proposed iron bridge is around 5' 6". Heavy checkrailing will be the order of the day!



Watermouth station occupies most of one side of the layout. The foundation for the curved iron bridge is in place in the foreground. Much remains to be done on these sections which had to be rebuilt on a wider radius curve when the layout came into the club's custodianship.



A view over the Up sidings, the warehouses are constructed from card and watercolour following 'Pendon' techniques. Pat English was extensively involved with Pendon as Wagon Steward, during his retirement and his modelling reflects the standards achieved there.



Pat was a great wit, and examples often turned up in his work. The corn merchant's premises we believe are based on a real prototype, if anyone recognises it we would love to know!



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A view towards the terminus, the sidings on the right are linked to the docks branch suggesting they were intended for exchange traffic to and from the Docks



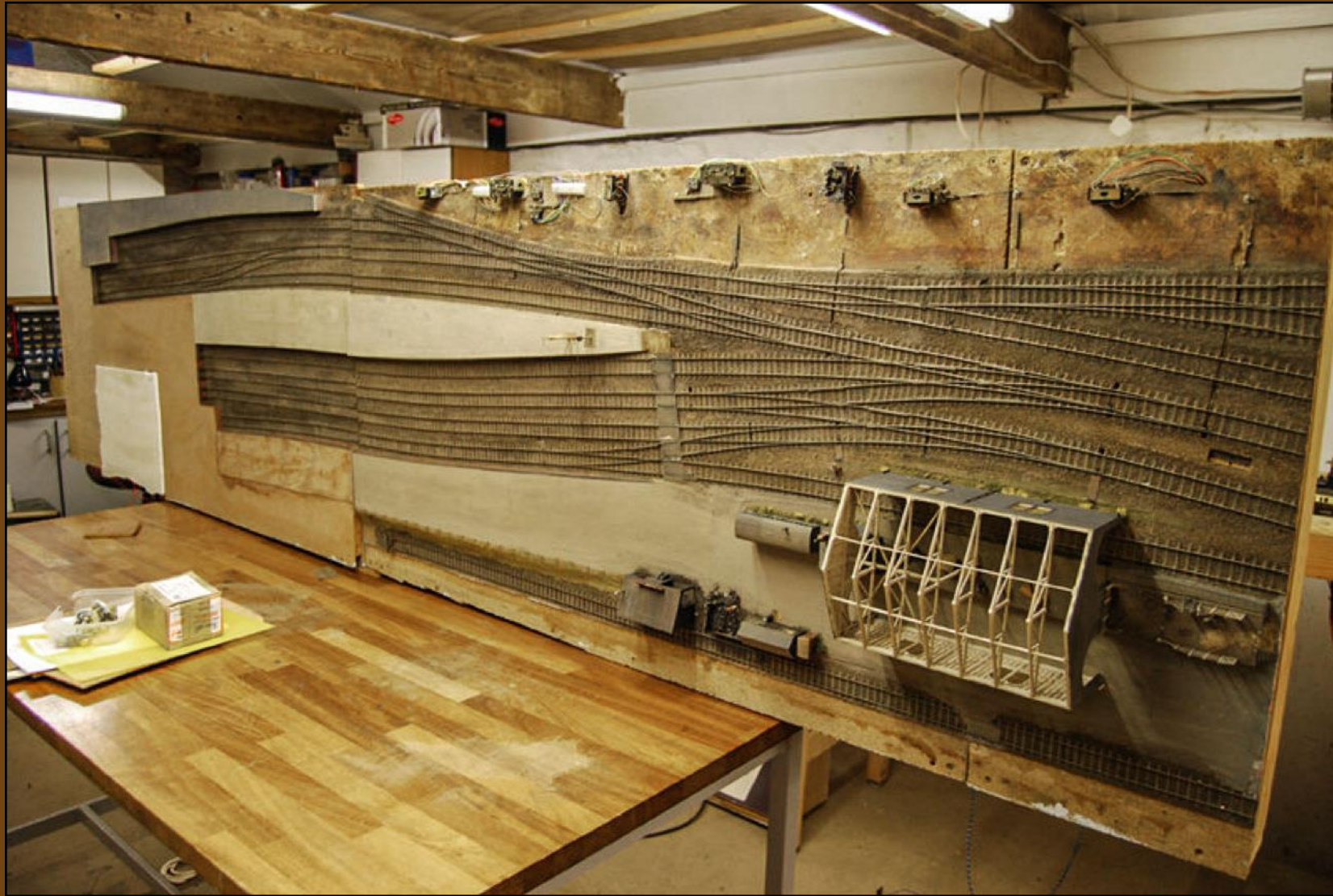
The station building at Watermouth with the later Buffet building beyond. Constructed of plastikard and pasteboard, it again will have been based on a prototype, the nearest we can find so far is part of the complex at Oxford before it was 'rationalised'. The station buildings are looked at in more detail later in the programme.



The Watermouth goods shed based on the classic Brunelian design.
Constructed entirely in Plastikard with full interior detail.



Curiously a water tank and inspection pit were placed on the run-round road. Given that there is already a locomotive shed in the complex, it seems a bit of overkill, unless anyone can advise differently?



The terminus boards from an unusual angle during re-wiring works. It does however give an indication of the long sweeping curves which characterise this layout. The Docks Branch is top left leading onto a section of baseboard that has since been lost.

St. David's Junction

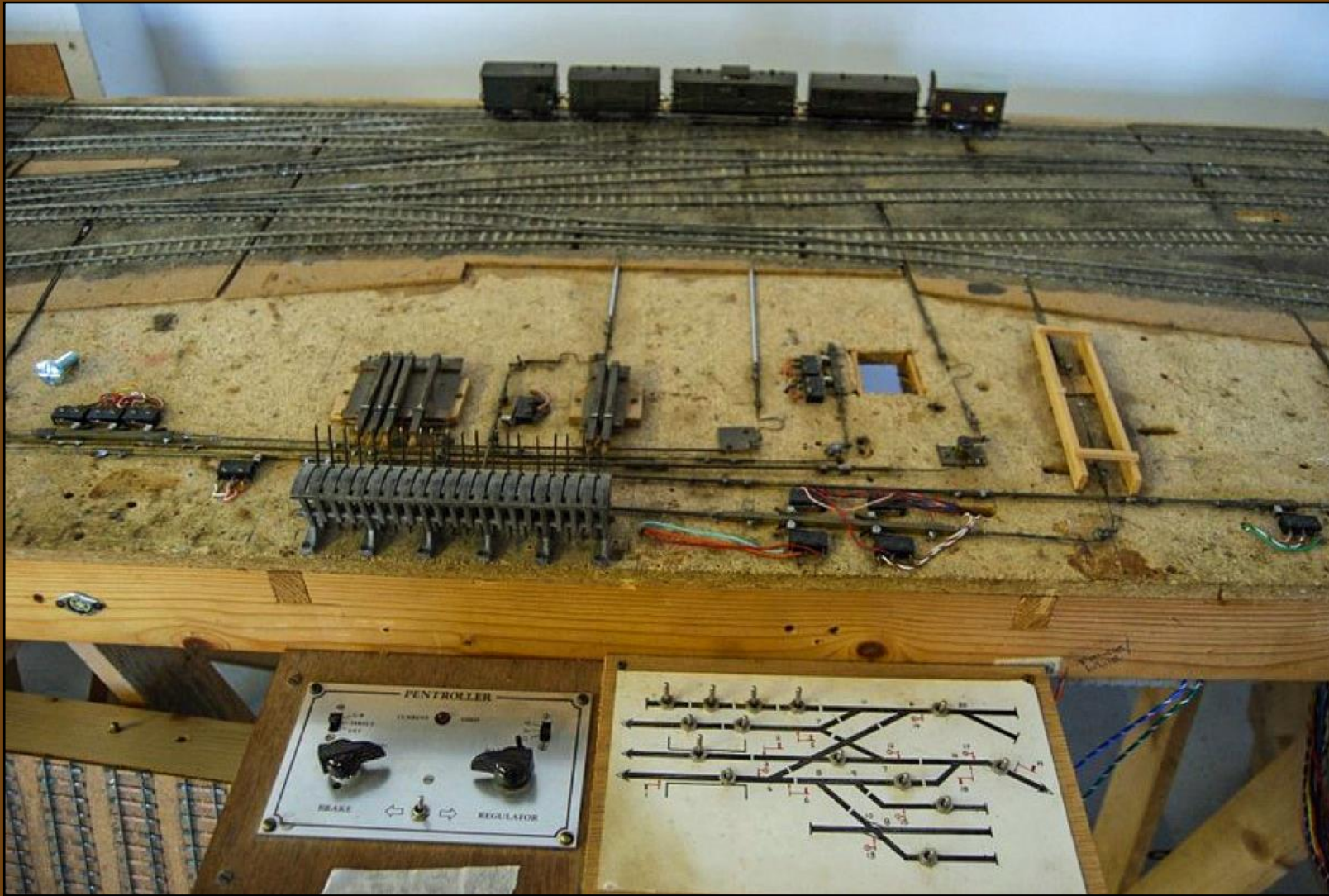




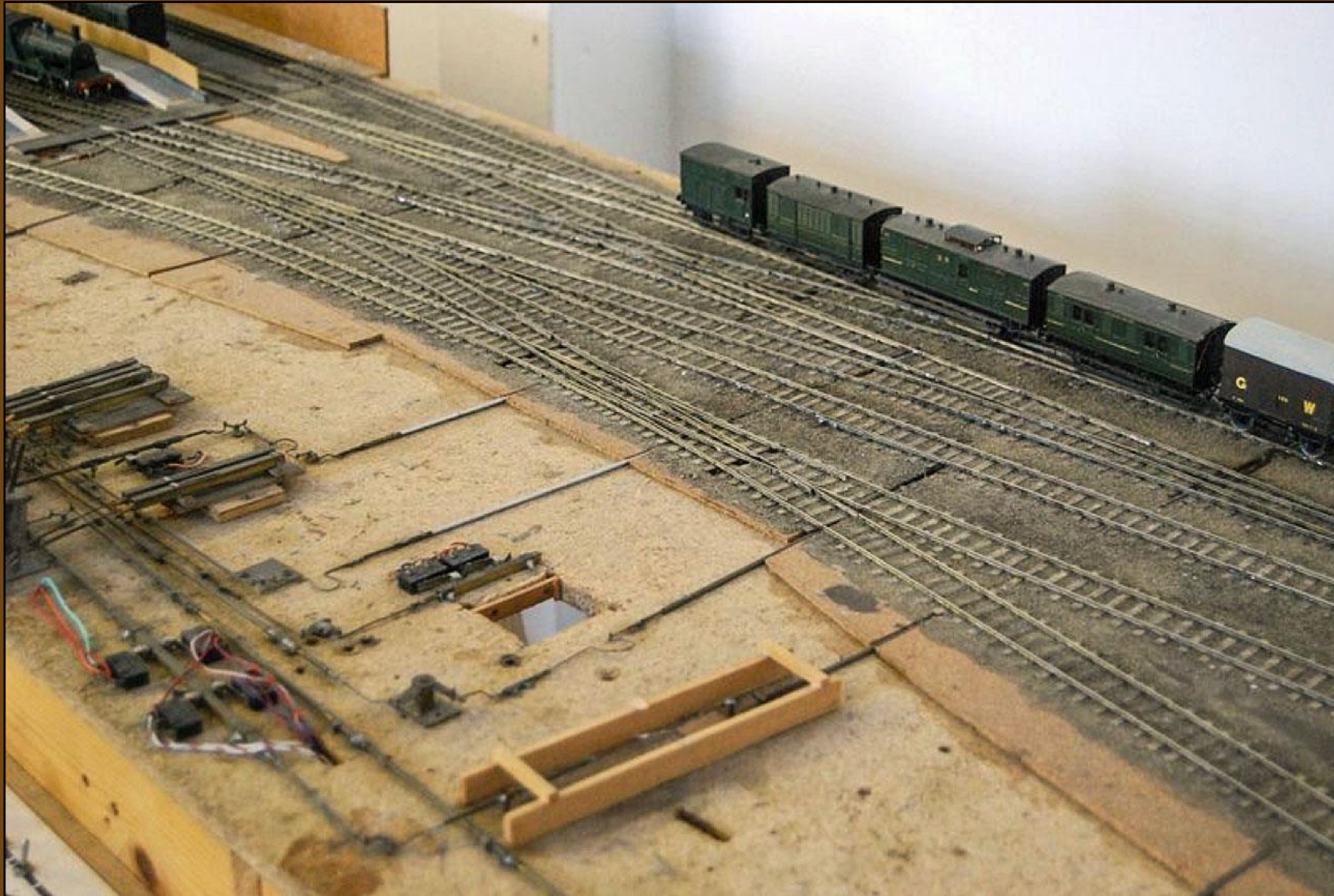
Early view of the junction in very embryonic form. New frames were made to be consistent with the rest, and the opportunity taken to extend the rear of the baseboard by 6" to create standard 4' x 2' units. There will be a great deal of work needed to bring this section forward because despite being over 40 years old, it still requires chairs to much of the track, and the trackwork itself is still in basic 'ply and rivet' condition.



An early view of the junction boards before they were widened at the rear. The far left-hand corner will be occupied by a small MPD and turntable, The estuary and bridge section is in the distance linking the two stations together.



St. David's Junction has some interesting and slightly esoteric trackwork, which we are still trying to work out! According to the diagram three lines converge into one with what is we think, a locomotive stabling road along the rear. Any observations gratefully received!



All the pointwork on this section was manually controlled from a GEM lever frame. Over the years much of this has failed, and the long term plan is to replace all with Cobalt motors.



The conceit for St David's Junction is that it is the meeting point for joint GWR & SR routes vying for the lucrative trade arising from Watermouth Docks. We are still unsure as to whether Pat intended Southern trains to have running rights into Watermouth, or if these services terminated at the junction. One thing is for sure and that is the iron bridge would have a weight restriction requiring heavier locomotives from long-distance trains to be detached and replaced by ones of lighter axle loading. A stabling depot and turntable being provided at the Junction for their use.

A closer look at the station buildings

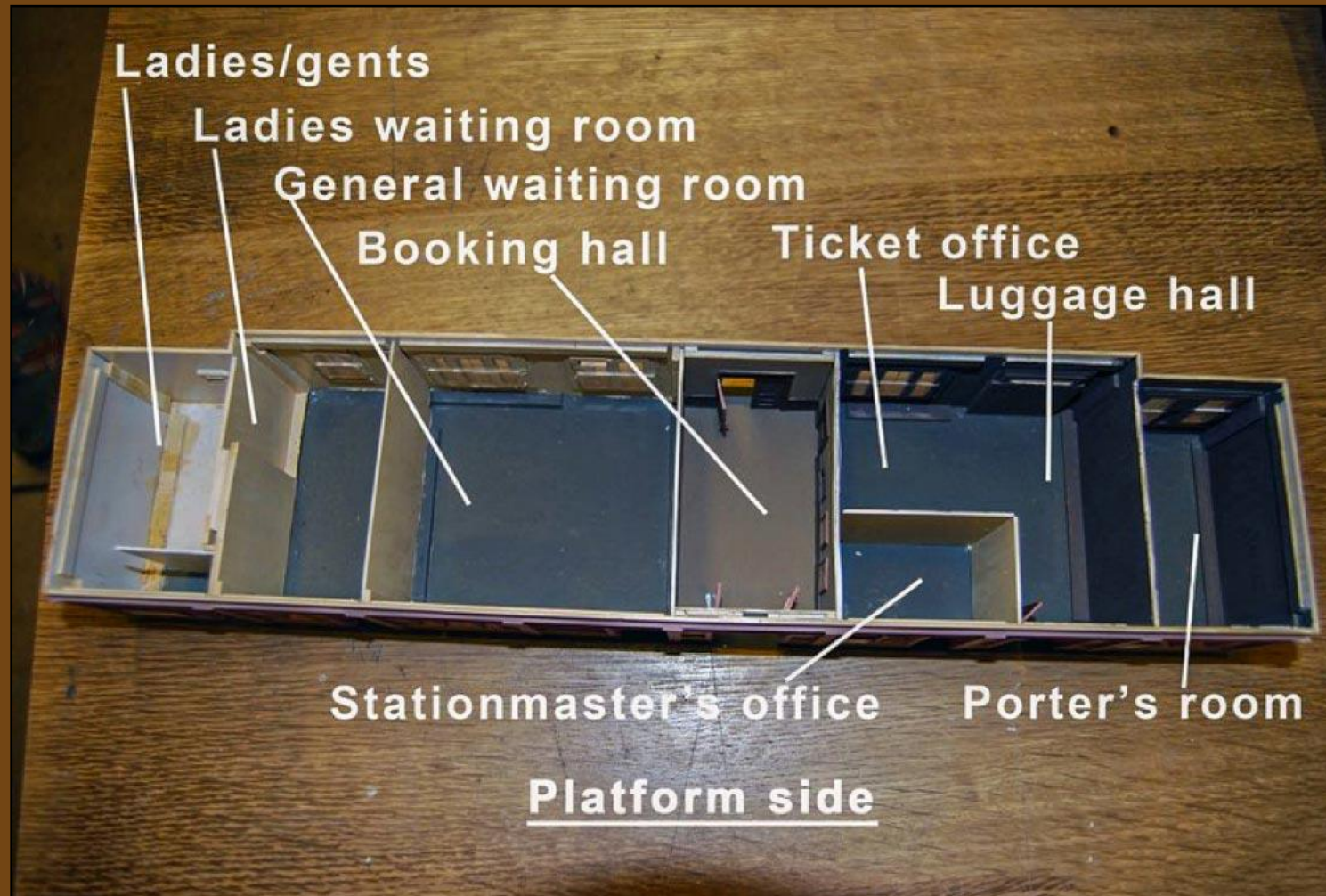




The platform face of the main station building. Constructed entirely in scribed Plastikard with a pasteboard roof (awaiting tiling – any offers?!) We are unsure of Pat's intentions with regards to the roof and it has been suggested an overall roof was intended as at Weymouth.



The forecourt face, we are assuming an awning and valence extending the length of the central section.



The internal layout (as far as I can guess) of the rooms. Not a particularly large building for the size of the station. I would be pleased to hear any observations on my guesswork!



No provision seems to have been made in the original building for a Buffet, and this little gem was discovered in the box of buildings that came with the layout. From pencil marks on the end wall and corresponding blank wall on the station building, I have 'second guessed' that this was intended as a later extension, probably circa. 1920? to the station building. The delightful Art Deco style is very distinctive and given Pat's expertise in prototype fidelity, almost certainly based on a real structure. Again, if anyone can shed some light on its origins we would be delighted to know.



The Buffet forecourt face. The double doorway on the right gives access to the platform.



The full ensemble from the platform face.

Some Examples of Rolling Stock



Some Examples of Rolling Stock

The following is a representative selection from the Watermouth Collection. Some models date from the very dawn of P4 and feature components then only just beginning to become available such as 'Studiolith' W iron units, MJT or ABS axlebox castings and underframe components.

Before Watermouth was started as a layout, Pat English was scratchbuilding rolling stock and some of his very early vehicles are in the collection today. He constructed a number of 10T open wagons from plasticard long before Slaters released their range of kits, and even today it is difficult to distinguish them from high quality injection moulded kits.

Apologies for the lack of 'artistic merit' with the images, they were taken purely as a record for insurance purposes when the Collection came into the Club's care.



6803 Bucklebury Grange

Malcolm Mitchell etched kit, Ultrastyle wheels, RG4 coreless
motor



2265 Collett Goods

Martin Finney kit, Ultrасcale wheels, RG4 coreless motor, full working inside motion.



1459 Metro 2-4-0.

Whitemetal kit, etched chassis. Wills kit, Anchoridge motor, 60-1 gearset



SR K10 The London and South Western Railway built 40 K10s between 1900 and 1902 for mixed traffic work. Smaller wheels than their T9 'Greyhound' express passenger sisters gave them lower power but higher tractive effort for low-speed work. Etched kit origin unknown, RG4 drive.



MSWJR 1336, in the collection simply because it was one of Pat's favourite engines. Cotswold whitemetal kit, etched chassis, Anchoridge motor and 40-1 gearset. Constructed circa. 1975



‘Duke’ class 3278 ‘Trefusis’

Finney kit, RG4 drive, full working inside motion



‘Dean Goods’ 2340,
Finney kit, RG4 drive, full working inside motion



‘Bulldog 3341 ‘Blasius’ popular in the Westcountry in the pre-War years for their power and smaller wheels making them ideally suited to the hilly routes. Their lighter axle loading made them useful on the larger branchlines. Finney kit RG4 drive and full working inside motion.



'517' class 571, the Mallard etched kit, recently rebuilt chassis with High Level 80-1 gearbox and Mashima motor. One of Pat's earliest Watermouth locomotives dating from circa. 1980



'27xx class' 2776

Malcolm Michell etched kit, RG4 drive, full working inside motion



‘B set’ typical branch line stock from the inter-War years. Re-painted and detailed Airfix models with correct bogies and additional underframe detail.



Dean clerestories, thought to be Slaters kits



A rake of three 'Toplights' from the Slaters kits



Full Brake, etched kit, make unknown



The 'Clifton Down' set, unlikely to have strayed this far south, but built because the Builder found them fascinating and a change from the usual GWR auto coaches. Etched kits, probably by Branchlines.



The classic GWR auto coach, whilst not strictly accurate (being an amalgam of two GWR diagrams) the Airfix model was ground-breaking for its time. Here with additional detail, correct bogies and weathering, it still presents as a fine model.



This and the following view is the double ended 'Toplight' slip coach Dia. F.16 7109 recorded by Roye England in BR days and scratchbuilt by Pat English circa 1970-75.



Built from Plastikard in the days when this material was 'state of the art' it demonstrates the superb level of craftsmanship Pat English brought to his work.



For a staunch GWR man, Pat English built a considerable amount of Southern passenger stock. The following slides are a representative selection.







It would be fascinating to think that Watermouth could be a destination for a portion of the Atlantic Coast Express with a coach detached at, perhaps, Axminster Junction to be worked down to the coast.



Freight Stock

There are some 200 items of freight stock in the collection from a variety of sources. Before Watermouth was started as a layout, Pat English was scratchbuilding rolling stock and some of his very early vehicles are in the collection today. He constructed a number of 10T open wagons from plasticard long before Slaters released their range of kits, and even today it is difficult to distinguish them from high quality injection moulded kits.

A wide range of kit manufacturers is represented, many no longer obtainable today, and latterly, Pat recognised the excellent qualities of emerging new RTR items which he modified and detailed to increase the stock list.

Much of the freight stock are mundane, run-of-the-mill vehicles typical of the working railway, but still delightful models, constructed and finished, often with carefully researched additional detail, to Museum quality standards.

A selection of these has been chosen along with some more unique items.



One of the earliest vehicles in the collection, circa 1970, this wagon is entirely scratchbuilt from plasticard with only Studiolith W iron units, buffers and underframe castings bought in. The iron strapping and corner plates are embossed aluminium foil.



Another scratchbuilt wagon circa 1970. The underframe components are whitemetal castings, possibly ABS at this period. The Studiolith pressed tinfoil W irons mounted on pieces of rubber band still function perfectly!



Early etched kits, the horsebox by Colin Waite, the clerestory thought to be by Mallard



A beautifully observed wagon load aboard a 'Scorpion' carriage truck,
thought to be a D & S kit.



40' Parcels Brake from a very old K's kit, frequently vehicles like this were down-graded for branch line work.



Northern visitors, the fish van is D & S, the ventilated probably Parkside



Etched kit, maker unknown



Whitemetal kits, most likely ABS, the insulated van is scratchbuilt but was never completed, awaiting underframe details.



Typical examples of many, representing a range of kit manufacturers



These are from Slaters



A pair of 'Mites' thought to be ABS kits



And a flock of 'Macaws' with a 'Lorient'



‘Loriot’ etched kit, maker unknown possibly Jidenco



‘Crocodile’ RTR by Bachmann with very little modification



Another example of RTR stock, again requiring very little modification apart from additional underframe detail and improved corridor connectors.



A 'Serpent' carriage truck, used for carrying farm machinery, carriages and loads not requiring a well-wagon, the holes along the side frame were for securing ropes. Etched kit, make unknown, possibly Jidenco.



Express freight vehicles from Parkside kits



Whitemetal kits, thought to be ABS





A six wheel 'Siphon' to Diag. 04 or 05 from the D & S kit



‘Brown’ vehicles were vacuum fitted freight wagons intended for travel in passenger trains. Usually designated for perishable goods or special livestock where speed was essential.



Cattle were less well catered for in un-fitted vans in a range of designs.



Bringing up the rear, appropriately enough, two 'Toads' branded 'Watermouth' and 'Kilmingiton' clearly intended for the Branch traffic. Etched kits from Frogmore Confederacy.

Watermouth

The Watermouth layout and collection represents some 45 years of one man's modelling. Restoring and developing the layout has taken many hours of work by a very few dedicated individuals and there is still a great deal to do.

Currently Watermouth is erected at the Clubroom of the Helston & Falmouth MRC just outside Helston in West Cornwall. Work on the rewiring and new control systems was progressing well until Covid struck just over a year ago, since when very little has been able to be done. We are hopeful that 2021 will see trains running again and the layout re-erected in its entirety.

We would welcome any modellers living in the area, or even beyond, who would be interested in becoming involved, there is a vast amount to do! contact Steve Howe at the address below:

cornwall@scalefour.org

Or visit www.hfmrc.com