

A New Deal for 'O' Gauge



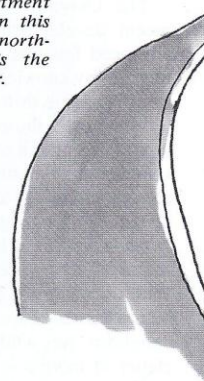
'The foundations of good running on any model railway is good track', wrote J. N. Maskelyne, and he went on to insist that 'nothing but the best workmanship will do at any part in the process; there must be no skimping of work, and every job should be frequently checked for accuracy.'

This was over forty-five years ago and the words of the legendary editor of *Model Railway News*, by then semi-retired, still ring true today. The article from which they have been extracted traced the history of W. S. Norris' celebrated layout and was accompanied by some truly inspirational photographs of the first finescale O gauge scenic layout. However, the full saga had started some years earlier, in the June 1957 issue of *Model Railway News*, where the 'Replanning and Rebuilding of Britain's Finest Layout' was described and illustrated with the first pictures of what was to become one of the most influential layouts ever built.

Dreaming of the day when inspiration on such a scale would repeat itself has occupied a couple of generations, but I feel it has now finally happened. Despite

its name, Kevin Wilson's layout is a high-fidelity model of Pontrilas on the joint Great Western and London Midland and Scottish line between Hereford and Newport, at the point where the Golden Valley line leaves for Hay on Wye. A 7mm scale layout that sets out to capture a junction station like Pontrilas is going to be large, but to fill the scene with sensitive modelling that folds back the past and introduces us to new ideas is going to be ground-breaking. That is why I became so captivated with the story behind this layout. From the day I first met Kevin and saw the work he had in progress I knew something big was about to happen and after talking to him I grew confident that it very soon would.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that he is such an excellent modeller himself, Kevin Wilson has been able to call on the services of many good friends to help with the Pontrilas/Bucks Hill project. The station building was begun by Carl Legg and completed, after the great man's untimely death, by Gordon Gravett. The unusual two-compartment LNWR brake first in this typically mixed north-bound formation is the work of John Petcher.

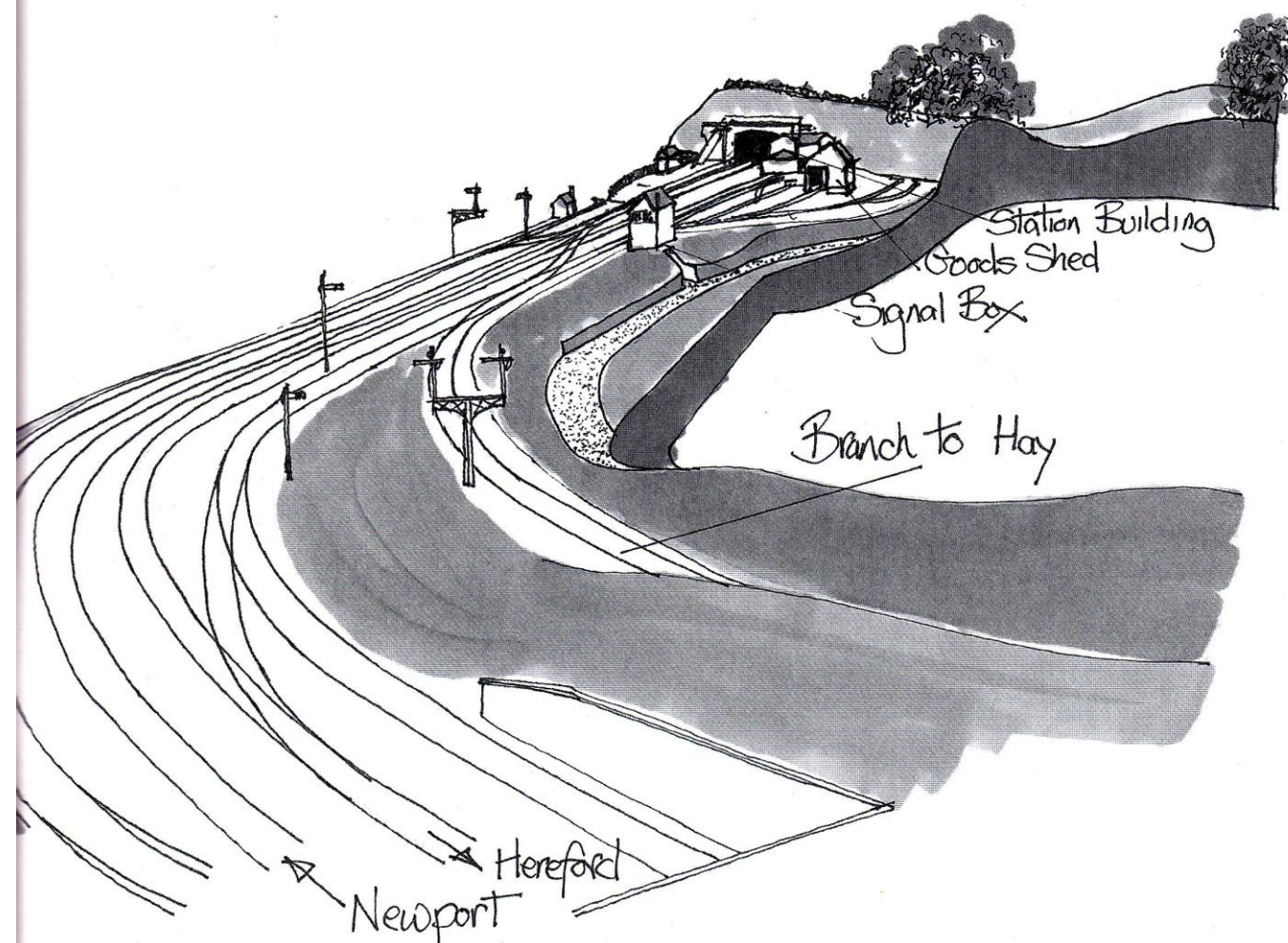


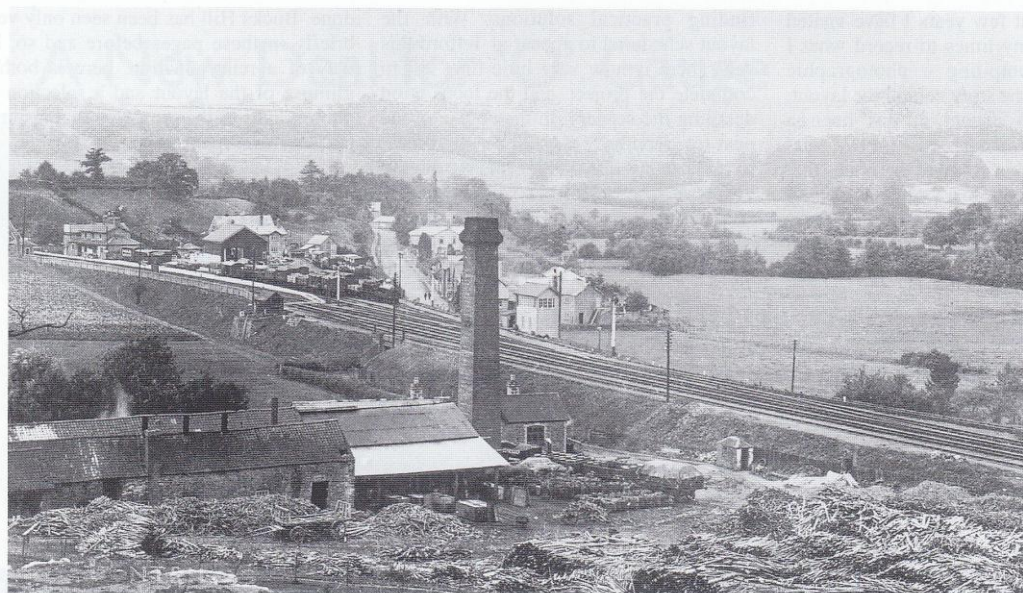
Over the last few years I have visited Bucks Hill many times to record what I have seen, compiling a photographic diary that tells the story behind the layout. As you might expect, it has been a thought-provoking period. I have discussed with Kevin many of the issues that arise in trying to build a 7mm scale layout of this size, and have been inspired both by his ideas and the way he goes about

finding practical solutions. With the layout scheduled to appear at Telford this year, there is now very little time left to complete the project, and the focus is on detailing the scenery. In the course of the next few months, MRJ will be going back to earlier days at Bucks Hill and bringing you photographs, text and drawings that will tell you the story of how it was all

done. Bucks Hill has been seen only very briefly in these pages before and so, by way of a reintroduction, here is both a glimpse of the layout and a selection of photographs of the prototype that inspired this heroic project.

BARRY NORMAN has been watching Kevin Wilson's 31mm gauge layout grow from sketchbook to impeccably finished item. As a prelude to a series of constructional articles, he explains why he believes Bucks Hill is such a significant step forward in 7mm scale railway modelling ...

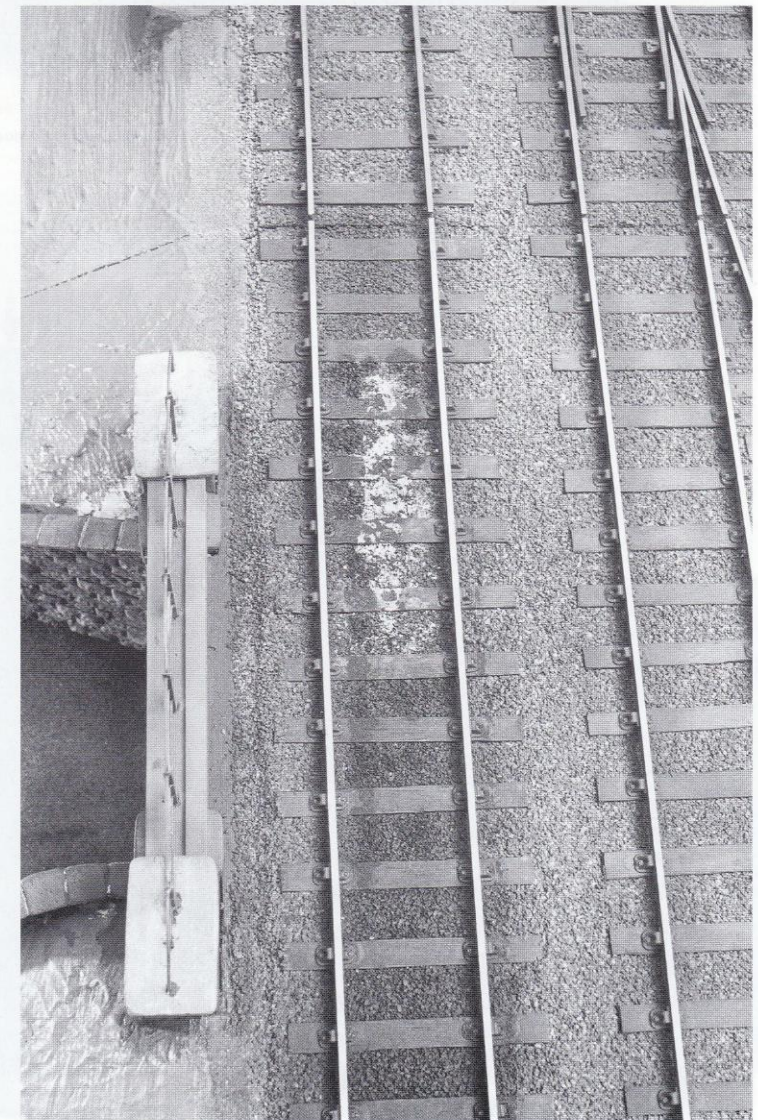




Top: An undated general view of Pontrilas station. Above: The underline bridge giving access to an acid works, photographed on 29th May 1941.
LENS OF SUTTON and NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM



South of the station, a surprising amount of visual focus falls on this road bridge, which on the prototype gave access to an acid works. The modelling of this key feature shows the calibre of the project of the whole. Scenic work is the joint responsibility of Kevin Wilson and Chris Gates. With a total layout footprint of 45ft x 20ft, there has been a lot for them to do...



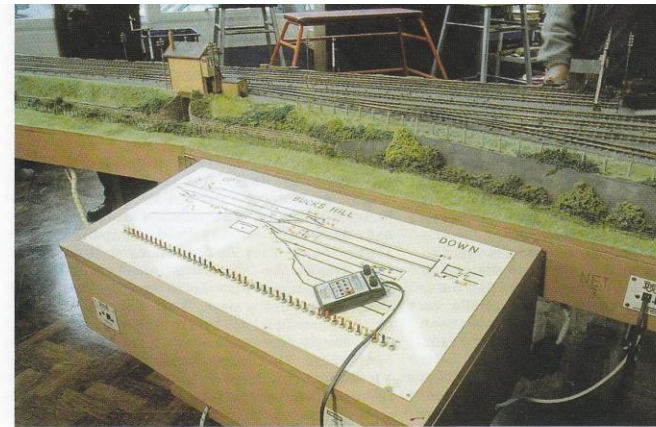
Trackwork is C&L, laid to 31mm gauge. Locomotives often stand for some considerable time at this point, waiting for the road, hence the build-up of ash and oily muck between the rails. Kevin's powers of observation are matched by his skill with the airbrush — his beautifully balanced (and convincing) coloration of the layout is one of the first things that strike the visitor.



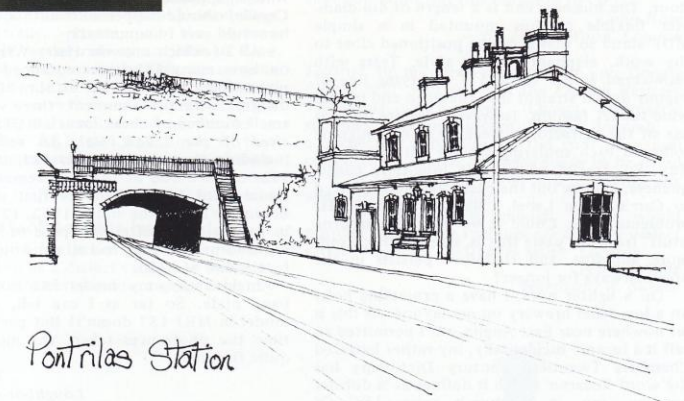
This Dean Goods was built, painted and weathered by John Hayes. The coaches, which do not seem at all out of place in such illustrious company, are Slater's.



Peter Squibb's signal box has been featured in these pages before (see MRJ 132). The signal, like virtually all the others on the layout, is the work of John Matthews, while the pointwork is by Carl Legg. Because everyone who has contributed to the construction of the railway shares a similar vision and a comparable level of skill, it is a remarkably uniform piece of work. Everything is of a piece, in keeping with the overall concept of the layout.



Bucks Hill was conceived from the start as a DCC-operated railway. The Digitrax system has proved itself extraordinarily reliable and easy to use.



Shades of Pendon — a long rake of mineral wagons, hand-painted by Chris Gwilliam, rolls along behind a curved-frame 'Bulldog' built by Kevin Wilson.

