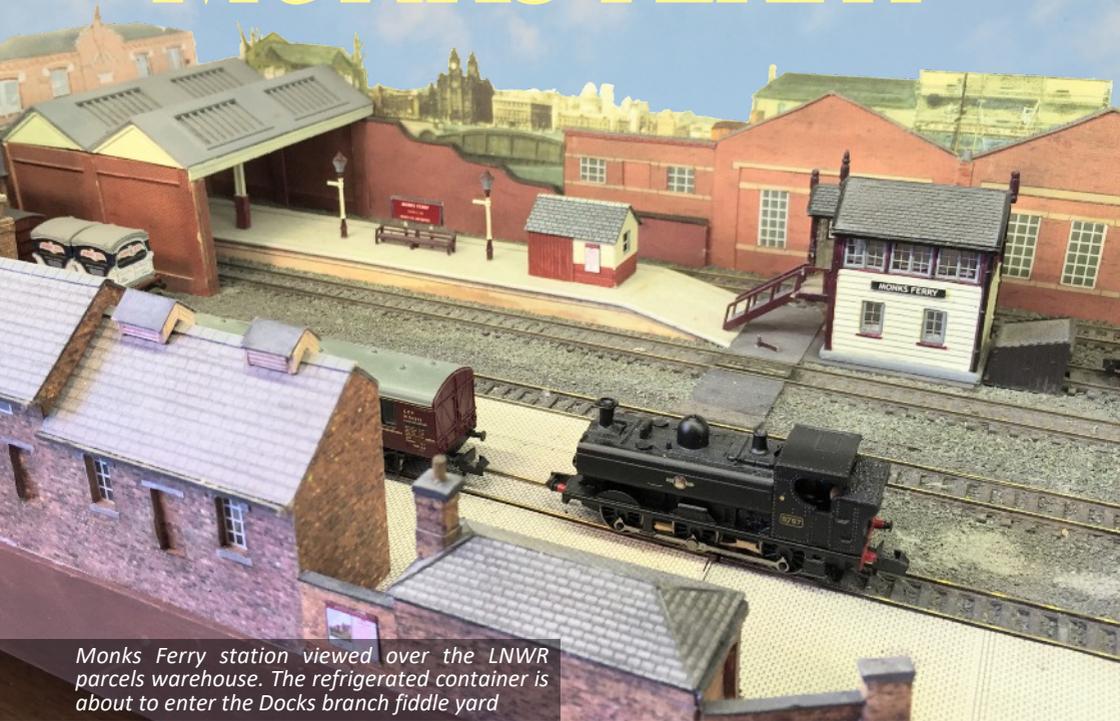


MONKS FERRY



Monks Ferry station viewed over the LNWR parcels warehouse. The refrigerated container is about to enter the Docks branch fiddle yard

An exercise in expanding sideways by Colin Wright (16240)

I have been building my Monks Ferry layout for about five years now and it is the first layout I have ever managed to get to some sort of finished state. The layout has grown piecemeal from a tiny micro layout by adding and extending bits and pieces as time and inspiration allowed. The first section to be built was Ivy Street sidings and this was just a simple three track shunting layout based on the Inglebrook sidings idea. It was very small, being about to 2' long and about 4 inches wide, with a 12" sector plate fiddle yard attached. There were no points at all on this section and everything was accessed via the sector plate.

The layout was designed to sit along the back of my desk so that when I was working I could run a couple of trains during my tea break. It had to be thin as my desk is only 2' deep and most of the space was taken up by laptops, printers etc.

Needless to say it got a little boring and after a while thoughts turned to extending it. I added a small terminal station at one end inspired by Birkenhead Monks Ferry station. This was the real terminus of the old Chester to Birkenhead Railway which later became the joint

LNWR and GWR main line from Chester to Birkenhead Woodside. This section was 3' long and 4" deep and I also extended the sector plate to accommodate two coach passenger trains.

Monks Ferry station opened to traffic in 1838 and subsequently closed to passenger traffic in 1878 when passenger services and ferry services diverted to the then new Woodside Station. Goods and coal traffic carried on until 1961 when the line finally closed as many river craft stopped using coal as fuel.

I have imagined that the Monks Ferry

service to Liverpool was retained alongside the Woodside Ferry well into the 1960s as a rush hour relief service for local traffic from New Brighton and West Kirby.

My model bears little resemblance to the actual station but I have incorporated some scenic and operational features that did actually exist such as the kickback siding off the platform road that represents a connection with Cammell Lairds ship yard. For those interested in the prototype I suggest visiting the excellent 'Disused Stations' website and searching for Birkenhead Monks Ferry www.disused-stations.org.uk

The model was also influenced by Malden Market, a micro layout by Andrew Smith, as featured on Carl Arendt's website. This had a brilliantly simple method of operation which suited me because I didn't have space for cross over points. Andrews layout used two engines to manoeuvre incoming stock and form trains ready for departure. I use a station pilot to shunt passenger and freight traffic as required.

Monks Ferry and Ivy Street sidings kept me busy for a while but once again thoughts turned to extending the layout. An increase in length was a bit of a problem as my desk was only 6' 6" long. Expansion was achieved by adding a 3" wide strip of base board along the front of the layout with a 6" wide piece in front of the sector plate thus hiding the fiddle yard and providing an additional docks branch and warehouse facility. This brought the overall size to 6'6" by 7" with two short 10" wide sections for the LNWR parcels yard and the bonded warehouse.

Adding this longitudinal strip was not straightforward as I had used the wire in tube method for point control and the control wires stuck out at the front of the layout. At first I decided to remove the existing controls and re build them with the new sections in place but then I realised that all I had to do was straighten out the existing control wire, cut it short and then screw a single connection strip cut from an electrical 'choc-block' on the end. A new short piece of wire bent into shape was passed through the new baseboard section and screwed into the other end of the connection strip. This resulted in minimum disruption to the existing set up and it works fine.

Operationally the new layout gave me the opportunity to develop a sequence of events that provided about half an hours worth of train movements before repeating itself. The main problem was the fact that the sector plate had only two storage roads and it was difficult to extend. As the two boards were connected end to end and filled the available length there didn't seem to be any way round this until I had to replace a printer at the end of my desk. I took the opportunity to buy a smaller wireless unit and re site it. This gave me some more space at right angles to the existing layout.

Now I could build a corner board the same length as Ivy Street and insert it between the two existing boards to turn the layout into an 'L' shape. Having an L-shaped layout in very little space meant second radius curves, but it did give me space for two extra hidden sidings thus considerably enhancing the operational



Corner module showing town scene and sough (suff) in the foreground



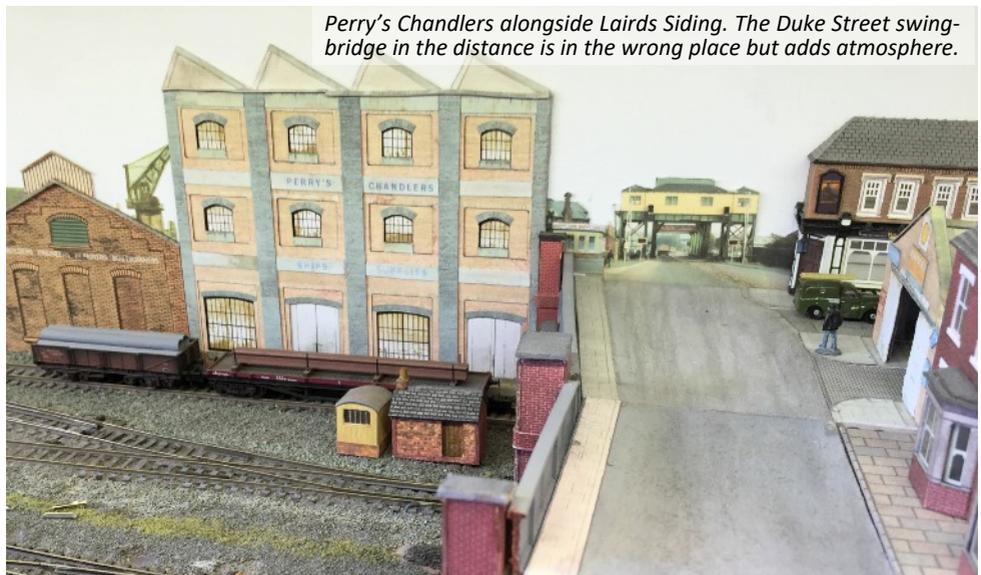
Pilgrim Street Junction with Lever Bros soap warehouse at the rear.

possibilities and the sharp curves could be hidden beneath a modest scenic disguise.

The idea for the small town scene in the corner came from an article in *Railway Modeller* on how to disguise sharp curves and proved quite effective. The curved section now mounted between the two original boards was named Pilgrim Street Junction the two additional hidden storage roads now represent the connection with the mainline at Birkenhead

Grange Lane and the original line through Ivy Street represents a connection with the rest of Birkenhead docks.

The names of actual local businesses and roads have been used to give a sense of place and purpose although they don't actually look like the real thing due to lack of space and lack of skill (I am still learning). Perry's chandlers existed alongside Monks Ferry but, as far as I know, was never rail connected. Cammell Lairds



Perry's Chandlers alongside Lairds Siding. The Duke Street swing-bridge in the distance is in the wrong place but adds atmosphere.



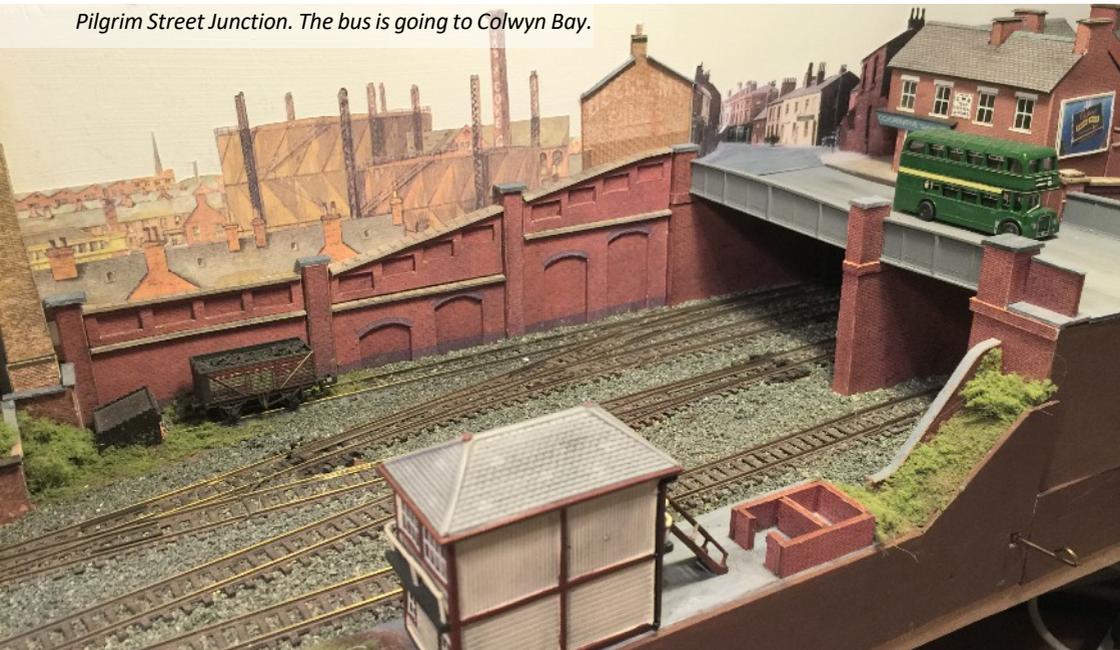
Bonded warehouse in front of sector plate complete with boundary wall mounted period adverts.

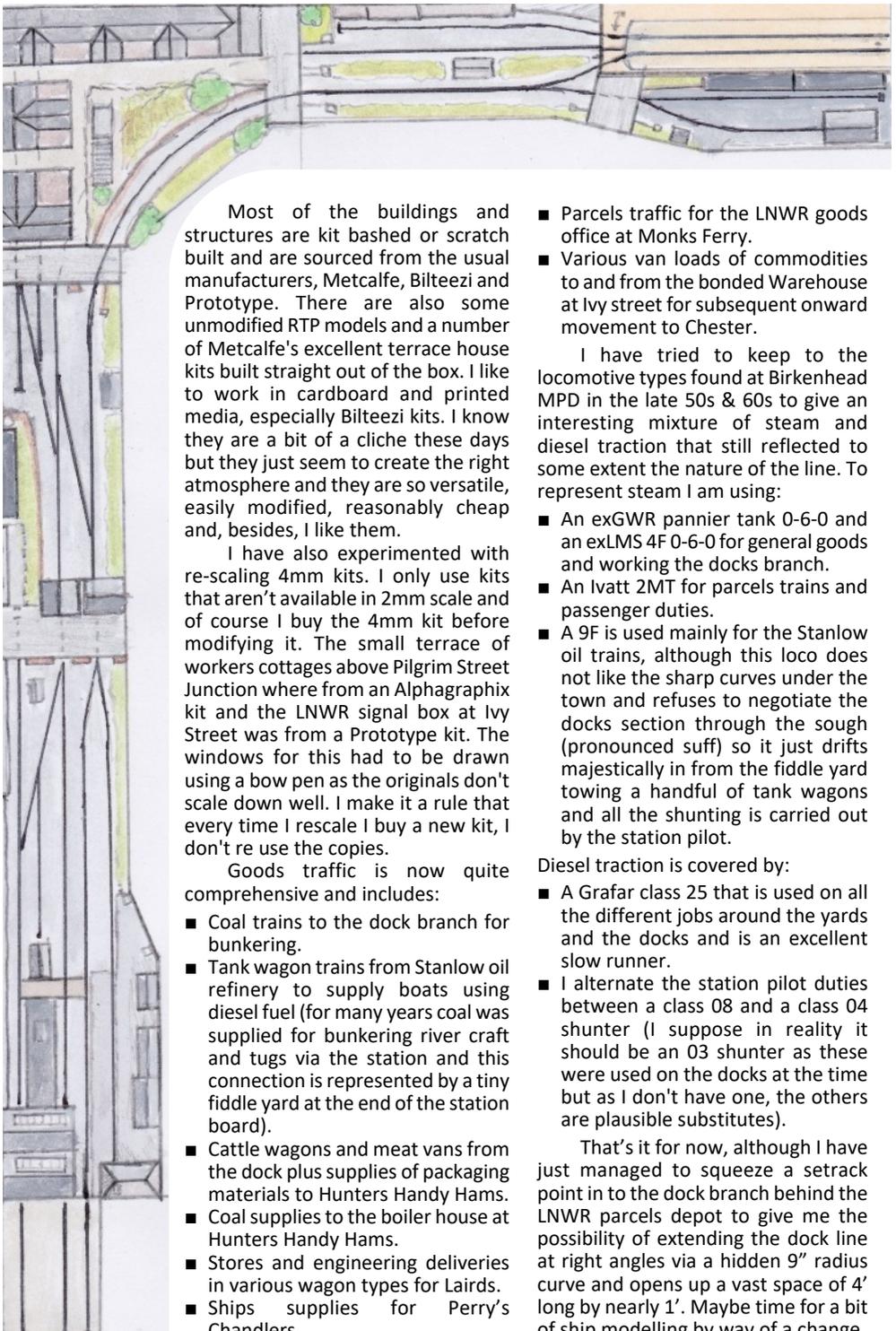
was actually connected to the real station for many years via a wagon turntable. Modelling this type of operation posed a bit of a problem but in the end I decided to 'hide' the turntable under a road bridge and exchange wagons in the siding as if they had been manoeuvred into the yard by offstage ropes and bollards.

The real Hunters Handy Hams factory was actually located in Broadgreen in Liverpool but I could not resist the name. My Mother-in-law

actually worked at the factory many many years ago skinning ox tongues ready for tinning (eeeeuuugh). I have given the firm a presence in Birkenhead on the pretext that a (real) lairage and slaughter house existed at Woodside and so some processing could be carried out for export directly from the docks instead of going all the way to Liverpool. The LNWR parcels depot and warehouse are loosely based on various facilities around Birkenhead docks.

Pilgrim Street Junction. The bus is going to Colwyn Bay.





Most of the buildings and structures are kit bashed or scratch built and are sourced from the usual manufacturers, Metcalfe, Bilteezi and Prototype. There are also some unmodified RTP models and a number of Metcalfe's excellent terrace house kits built straight out of the box. I like to work in cardboard and printed media, especially Bilteezi kits. I know they are a bit of a cliché these days but they just seem to create the right atmosphere and they are so versatile, easily modified, reasonably cheap and, besides, I like them.

I have also experimented with re-scaling 4mm kits. I only use kits that aren't available in 2mm scale and of course I buy the 4mm kit before modifying it. The small terrace of workers cottages above Pilgrim Street Junction were from an Alphagraphix kit and the LNWR signal box at Ivy Street was from a Prototype kit. The windows for this had to be drawn using a bow pen as the originals don't scale down well. I make it a rule that every time I rescale I buy a new kit, I don't re-use the copies.

Goods traffic is now quite comprehensive and includes:

- Coal trains to the dock branch for bunkering.
- Tank wagon trains from Stanlow oil refinery to supply boats using diesel fuel (for many years coal was supplied for bunkering river craft and tugs via the station and this connection is represented by a tiny fiddle yard at the end of the station board).
- Cattle wagons and meat vans from the dock plus supplies of packaging materials to Hunters Handy Hams.
- Coal supplies to the boiler house at Hunters Handy Hams.
- Stores and engineering deliveries in various wagon types for Lairds.
- Ships supplies for Perry's Chandlers.

- Parcels traffic for the LNWR goods office at Monks Ferry.
- Various van loads of commodities to and from the bonded Warehouse at Ivy Street for subsequent onward movement to Chester.

I have tried to keep to the locomotive types found at Birkenhead MPD in the late 50s & 60s to give an interesting mixture of steam and diesel traction that still reflected to some extent the nature of the line. To represent steam I am using:

- An exGWR pannier tank 0-6-0 and an exLMS 4F 0-6-0 for general goods and working the docks branch.
- An Ivatt 2MT for parcels trains and passenger duties.
- A 9F is used mainly for the Stanlow oil trains, although this loco does not like the sharp curves under the town and refuses to negotiate the docks section through the sough (pronounced suff) so it just drifts majestically in from the fiddle yard towing a handful of tank wagons and all the shunting is carried out by the station pilot.

Diesel traction is covered by:

- A Grafar class 25 that is used on all the different jobs around the yards and the docks and is an excellent slow runner.
- I alternate the station pilot duties between a class 08 and a class 04 shunter (I suppose in reality it should be an 03 shunter as these were used on the docks at the time but as I don't have one, the others are plausible substitutes).

That's it for now, although I have just managed to squeeze a setrack point in to the dock branch behind the LNWR parcels depot to give me the possibility of extending the dock line at right angles via a hidden 9" radius curve and opens up a vast space of 4' long by nearly 1'. Maybe time for a bit of ship modelling by way of a change.



Above : Bonded warehouse with scratch-built LNWR yard entry gatehouse. The sign on the wall is a reduced photo of a real sign. **Below :** Hunter Hardy Hams and road over-bridge. (Note the clever use of images on the back-scene that gives the impression that the road, that runs directly in to it, actually continues on and in to the distance. See also the photographs at the bottom of pages 78 and 79 for other examples - ed.)

