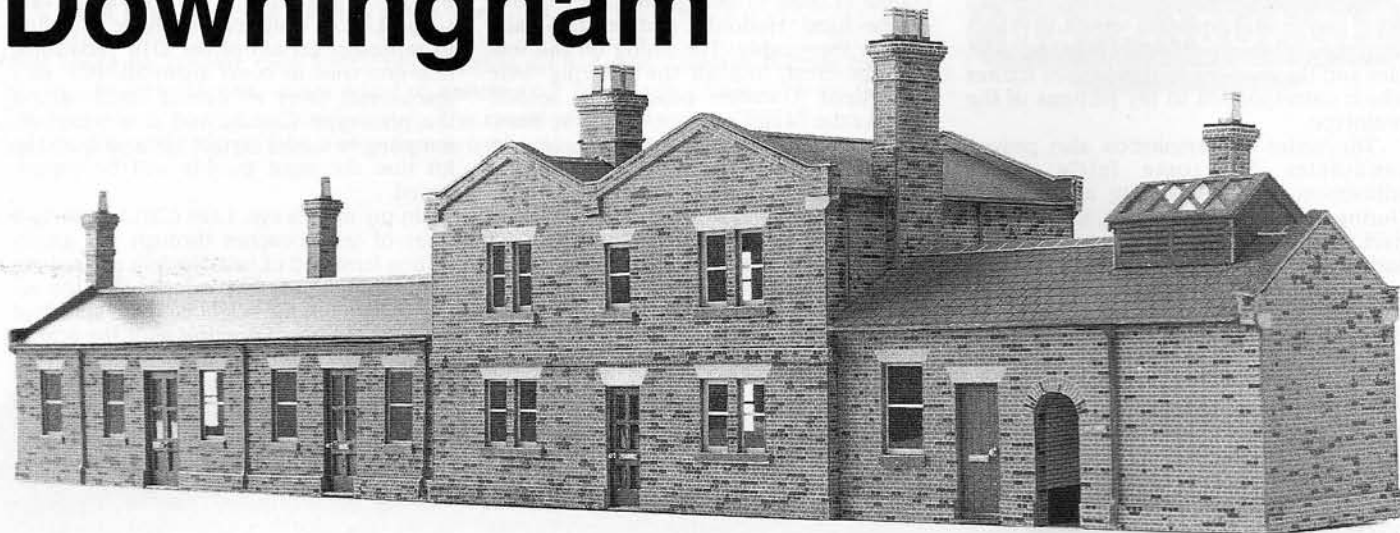


Downingham



After last issue's exercise in tailoring a tiny railway to fit the back seat of an ageing car, Iain Rice turns to the comparatively commodious confines of his infamous shed on Dartmoor to define the size of this, the latest offering in his regular layout design feature. Moderately sized market towns, he points out, can provide the focus for modelling either a prototype or a fictional branch. With two separate lines sharing a common terminus and scope to employ fair sized mixed traffic locos to handle a wide variety of services, this sort of scheme is very 'operator friendly' and can provide an ideal basis for a 'lifetime layout'. And if you haven't got a lifetime, Peco's excellent Streamline track, some appropriate RTR locos and stock and a selection from the current crop of superb pre-printed card building and structure kits will get you going reasonably quickly.

A branch line terminus – how corny! Haven't we rather done that particular subject to death in recent years? Well, yes and no. A certain type of branch terminus, which I characterise as the 'bucolic' has certainly achieved a rather omnipresent popularity. Such termini are usually variations on the basic 'loop and two sidings' plan, and tend to feature rather twee cottage-style buildings (complete with roses around the door) and picture postcard scenery.

Now, there's absolutely nothing *wrong* with models of this sort; I've built quite a few myself, and MORILL's own *Broadwell Green* project isn't so far removed from this genre. They do have a very strong appeal, compounded of their attractive appearance and their suitability as homes for the sort of smaller and older stock that makes such nice models.

However, these models are generally idealised representations of the most minor type of branch, only one step removed from a light railway. In reality, most branchlines were much more substantial than this, and fetched up in stations a great deal more imposing than anything with roses round the door. In the heyday of our railways, most market towns were served by such branches, and were provided with very comprehensive facilities.

Indeed, many such places found themselves served by more than one railway, either sharing a common station or with completely separate facilities in different parts of the town. Among many examples, Stamford in Lincolnshire hosted the Great Northern and the Midland, while Wisbech, out on the Cambridgeshire fens, had the Great Eastern and M&GN on opposite sides of town. St Albans Abbey was a more famous, if less typical, example where the LNWR and GNR branches terminated in the same station.

The bipartisan branchline

The pedigree of *Downingham* might be described as 'by St Albans out of Uppingham'. I had in mind a station suited to a prosperous East Midlands Shire town such as Uppingham, but with a St Albans-like sharing of the terminus by two separate pre-

group companies. My fictional *Downingham* is situated in the same rolling Rutland countryside as Uppingham, but a league or two to the north east. The two companies serving it could thus be the St Albans partners of the GNR and LNWR and (as at St Albans) they meet at a junction a short way out from the terminus.

In this unholy alliance, I deem the senior partner to be the GNR, who built their line in, oh, about eighteen sixty something. The LNWR came along a few years later, and so must accept the junior role. *Downingham* station is therefore specifically Great Northern, and has been designed around the appealing Prototype Models range of card building kits for GNR structures, which are all based on prototypes in this locality. The delightful loco shed and characteristic GNR vertically boarded signal box are both from Stamford, the splendid station building is from Heckington, and the goods shed hails from Little Bytham. I'd add a canopy to the station, but otherwise these buildings are right on the nose for a station of this size and type.

Should you prefer the bias to be t'other way about, however, Prototype Models can also provide you with a complete suite of structures for the LNWR, based for the most part on the real Uppingham, which are likewise tailor made for the job. In fact, if you're modelling the East Midlands, Prototype Mod-

els are well on the way to covering your every structural need.

Having such a comprehensive selection of matching structures available from a single source is a tremendous start to any layout. These particular building kits will handsomely repay a bit of extra work in embossing the detail and in weathering, and are an excellent and rewarding basis to work on. I love card kits!

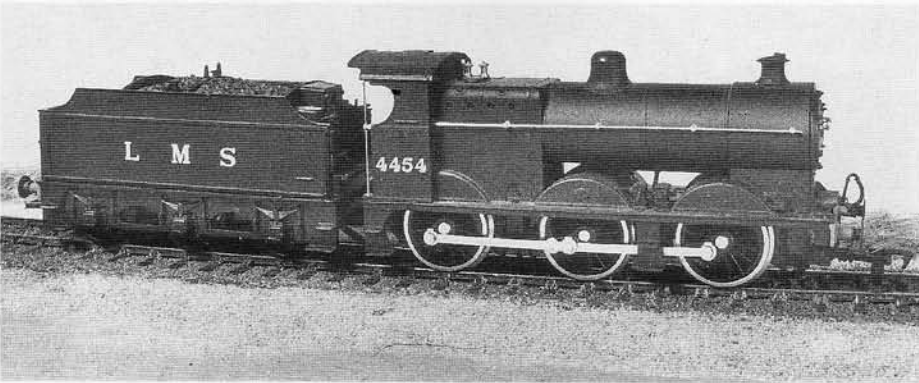
Town and country

Scenically, the layout divides into two distinct areas, the vernacular buildings of *Downingham* itself and the landscape bordering the rail approach to the terminus.

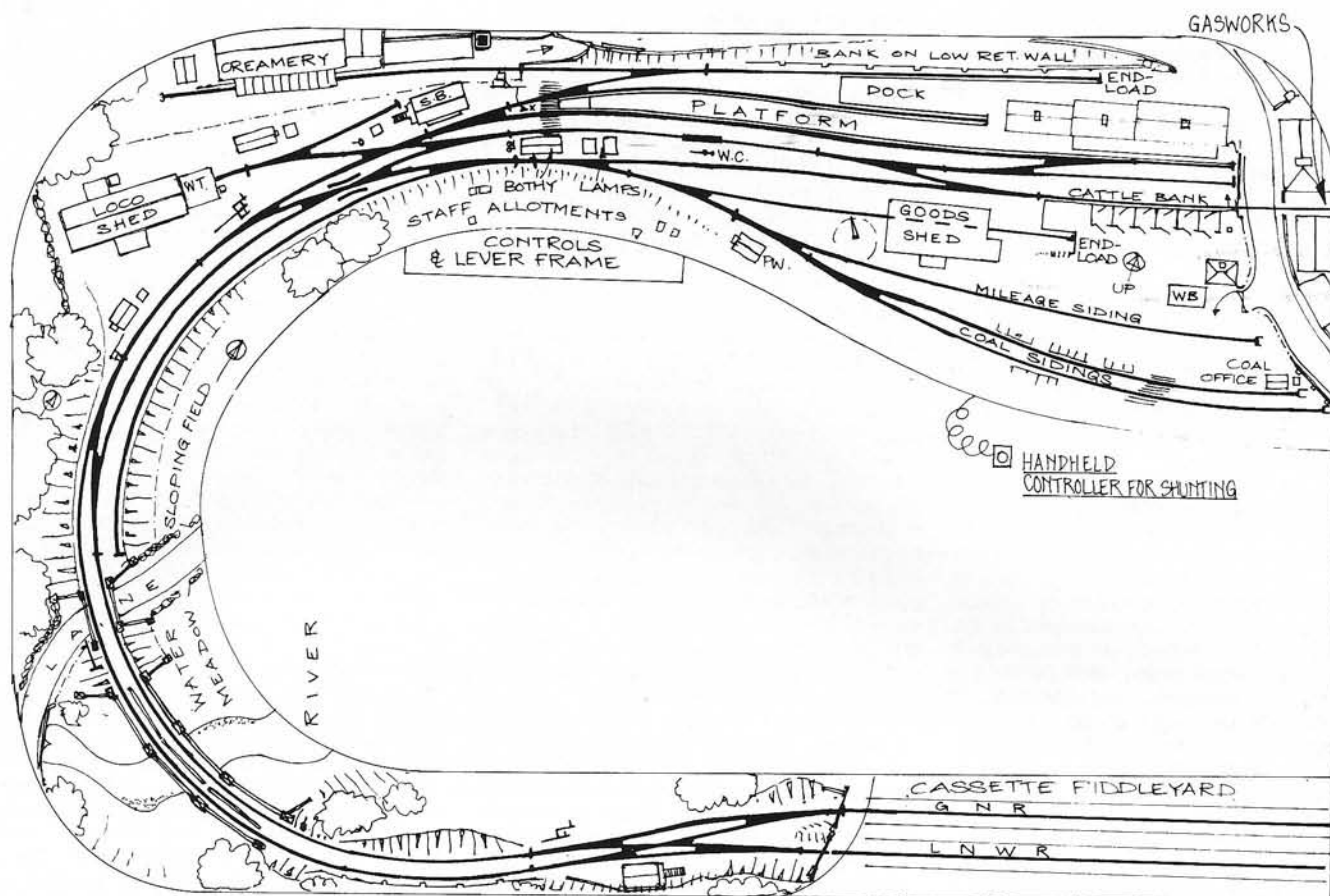
The non-railway structures flanking the roadway to give an impression of the town are a mixture of Prototype Models and Howard Scenics card kits, partly cut down to low relief. Prototype's terraced houses and imposing corner public house (based on Stamford's Railway Hotel) rub shoulders with Howard Scenics' row of shops. These delightful and versatile card structure kits represent prototypes which would live very happily in this context, the shops in particular being a great foreground addition with lots of scope for some challenging extra detailing work. The latest releases from Howard Scenics are pictured elsewhere in this issue, showing just how attractive and authentic card models can be.

The only other major structure is the creamery, which could be produced by re-working and upgrading some of the long lived and basically authentic Billezi sheets. Backing with thick card, proper glazing and embossing, combined with some subtle weathering, can quite transform these well observed structures.

Out in the country, the main effort comes where the line crosses a small river on a



The ex-Airfix 4F 0-6-0 is just the sort of RTR loco with which a layout such as *Downingham* could be quickly stocked. As this issue's feature on the GWR Mogul shows, a couple of evenings' work can work wonders for the authenticity of such products.



three span girder bridge, based on a modified Prototype Models 'Late Victorian Bridge' kit. If you're really into bridges, you could provide separate spans for the GN and LNWR lines, on the basis that the doubling came after original construction. The minor road bridge between the end of the headshunt and the river bridge could, by way of contrast, be the brick arch component of the Prototype kit.

Otherwise, the 'country' is all down to a few stately elms – a period detail now sadly as defunct as the steam railway – and some rough vegetation on the embankment sides to contrast with the lush turf of prime dairy pasture in the lineside fields. Tony Hill's scenic methods, which he describes in his current series in *Model Railways* magazine, would lend themselves to this work. (Tony is pencilled in to make a valuable addition to the MORILL Handbooks series, by the way.)

The only other feature of note in the plan as drawn is the junction between the GNR and LNWR lines. Here, I have envisaged a LNWR signal cabin and signalling installation. Prototype Models do a beauty, of just the right size, based on the LNWR standard design from the 1870s, again just right for this layout, while Ratio can provide the LNWR signals. In fact, there would be scope for some very pretty signalling indeed on this layout, with Great Northern lattice masts and somersaults to add a bit of spice to the challenge. Ratio's LNER signals might provide a basis, with specialist bits from Model Signal Engineering or D & S Models. The two lines finally disappear offstage beneath road over-bridges, with the Prototype Models kit used exactly as intended in a venerable, but nonetheless effective, ploy.

Not necessarily the hard way

I have conceived *Downingham* as a layout that could be largely built using off-the-shelf components and straightforward kits, but which also offers scope for the more fine scale orientated enthusiast. Thus, the trackwork is designed around the geometry of

Peco Streamline, but would lend itself readily to SMP bullhead flexible track and hand laid copperclad pointwork. The line is double tracked on its approach from the GN/LNWR junction to conform to the Board of Trade regulation that states that passenger carrying lines 'should be double at any point of junction'. It makes a nice feature, so for once I have resisted any temptation to bend the rules!

However, including this double tracked approach as well as the junction does take a lot of space and only leaves room for a 4ft long cassette fiddleyard. As this won't accept the longest train which the station can handle, it may be desirable to sacrifice a bit of visible track in favour of greater fiddleyard

capacity. You could omit the junction, deeming it 'offstage' and, by replacing the double slip with a turnout and dispensing with the inner road, 'single' the approach.

On the main line, the curves are of 3ft radius or greater, so that it would be quite possible to build the layout to EM gauge. For P4 standards, however, I feel a little more width would be required. As it stands, the design is sized, once again, to fit the 11ft 6ins x 7ft 6ins internal dimensions of my standard twelve by eight garden shed.

The full panoply of facilities typically associated with a middleweight branchline terminus are present. The main platform is long enough to accommodate five 57ft coaches, and there's a bay platform for the LNWR



The layout is planned around pre-printed card structures such as the station building on the opposite page; it is from the Prototype Models range which includes a number of suitable railway structures for *Downingham*. The townscape is also based on card kits; the shops pictured above were built from the Howard Scenics 'Victorian House kit'. They would provide foreground focus as well as offering plenty of scope for detailing. Older examples of the genre, such as the kits from Superquick and Billezzi, can easily be upgraded to blend into the whole: in fact, with careful initial selection and subsequent weathering, card structures from a wide variety of sources can be used to present a homogenous redbrick environment which captures the flavour of the East Midlands.

push-pull trains. The goods yard boasts a full range of facilities – goods shed, cattle dock, craneage, coal and mileage sidings. There is also a parcels and perishables dock with end-loading facilities behind the station. Two industries, a small creamery and the local gasworks, are served by private sidings, the one for the gasworks crossing the road and disappearing between buildings. A single wagon could be hidden offstage here. Locomotive needs are met by that substantial single road shed.

If the whole thing reminds you of earlier, less elaborate versions of Peter Denny's *Buckingham*, then that's just as it should be. What better example is there of the modelling scope offered by the larger branchline terminus?

Stock potential

One of the other key inspirations behind *Downingham* has been the recent welcome introduction of just the right sort of RTR locos and stock for a layout of this type, in either a 'grouping' or steam era BR setting. I would envisage the stock list for this model railway embracing such useful middleweights as the Bachmann V1/V3 2-6-2T on the ex-GNR line local passenger trains, with perhaps a Dapol N2 for company, and Bachmann's impending J39 for freight working. Through trains might call for a Replica B1, or even the Bachmann Ivatt 2-6-2T, while the occasional goods over the ex-LNWR lines might call for a Hornby Jinty or perhaps an Airfix/Dapol 4F.

Passenger stock is not quite so easy. Bachmann's Thompson coaches would be fine for through trains, with Ian Kirk plastic kit LNER suburbans for GN line locals. The LMS Suburban coaches from Dapol – if you can lay hands on any – would be fine companions

for the Ivatt tank, and the surgery to produce a push-pull driving trailer isn't too drastic.

Goods vehicles present no problem, especially if a few plastic kits are added to the shopping list; the Dapol (ex-Airfix) kit for the BR 20T brake van is still the only halfway decent version of the basic LNER design, but the Dapol RTR version of the LMS 20 tonner is a fine model. A good selection of apposite parcels stock is also available in both RTR and kit form, while Lima can dish up milk tanks for the creamery.

Operation

Until Beeching swung his axe (which not only severed complete branches, but also shrivelled the service on the survivors), the train service on many of these middleweight branchlines was far removed from the 'two trips and a pick-up goods' of more minor rural lines. As well as a regular local passenger service – in this case, in two distinct directions – there would be through trains to more important destinations, perishables and parcels traffic, regular goods workings and livestock specials run in conjunction with the local market. In other words, a fair cross section of train types, which would actually call for pretty intensive operation, especially if properly worked to timetable.

Given that I envisage this layout as a permanent affair for home operation, a mechanical system of point and signal actuation worked from a prototypical lever frame would seem desirable. There is certainly scope for simultaneous train movements, with shunting in the goods yard able to proceed independently of workings on the main line. The electrical set up would therefore need to include at least two independent controllers, with block switching to either.

While the layout is quite capable of single handed working, it could give employment to up to three operators – one driver working the main line, a second handling shunting, pilot

duties and looking after the fiddleyard, and a signalman. There might also be scope for a card waybill system to determine the working of the goods yard, with each wagon having a definite destination allocated.

A lifetime's development

Downingham is very much a model railway which, like *Buckingham*, could be continuously developed and upgraded. Peco track could eventually give way to hand laid scale permanent way; kitbuilt buildings could later be replaced with individual scratchbuilds, and stock could be gradually augmented by kits or handbuilt items to a higher standard. As a more ambitious exercise, the whole model could be taken back to the pre-group period, which would call for kitbuilt locos and stock.

There is no shortage of candidates: Great Northern Ivatt 4-4-2Ts by Finecast or Craftsmen, with an upgraded Hornby GNR 0-6-0 saddle tank and a London Road Models GNR J6 0-6-0 for the goods. Crack motive power might run to the ex-M&L whitemetal kit for the Ivatt 4-4-0 which is now available from Alan Gibson, or perhaps a small GNR Atlantic from the DJH kit. The Webb 5ft 6ins 2-4-2T and the Cauliflower, both from London Road Models, could serve the LNWR, with plenty of possible alternatives from both the Gibson and LRM ranges. D & S Models offer a good selection of pre-group goods and passenger stock in both whitemetal and etched brass kit form, including many GNR and LNWR prototypes, so there's plenty of choice.

All in all, the larger branchline terminus makes a worthy and challenging subject for a singlehanded home layout with considerable long term potential. After all, *Buckingham* has kept Peter Denny busy and contented for well over forty years!

The YORK Show

The Main Stand, York Racecourse.

April 2, 3, 4 and 5 1994

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The trade will be out in force – about forty stands are expected – and **Irwell Press** and **Modelling Railways Illustrated** will be attending. There will be demonstrations, outdoor attractions and a live steam miniature railway.

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