

High Wycombe 1955

This is the first of what will, I hope, be a series of occasional articles charting the construction of my layout. This first chapter covers the reasons for choosing Wycombe and progress to date. Subsequent offerings will appear irregularly as and when progress permits something to say.

To answer the ‘why Wycombe?’ question, we need to go back to 1998. This is my second incarnation in the modelling world, having made models from an early age and learned many of my skills as a junior at the Guildford Model Engineering Society. Modelling gradually dwindled when I went off to University and stopped completely when I joined the Royal Navy and then got married. However, interest in railways in general never waned.

1st of November 1998 – number one son’s 11th birthday party roller skating and I had the misfortune to be pulled over and fractured my shoulder blade. Not a pleasant experience, but in the month off work, visits to the library revealed a lot of books on local railway history and pictures of Wycombe really stirred my imagination – I enclose one that really inspired me (page 17). The backdrop of the retaining wall, the signature split platforms and marvellous array of signals looked hugely modelogenic. Understanding the variety of traffic that passed through added further impetus and my imagination was fired by the prospect of full length express trains with a large variety of motive power options – virtually all ex GW classes and a significant number of ex LNER as well as BR stuff. There are plenty of options in the rolling stock department as well with Western, North Eastern and Southern coaching stock being commonly seen. Before long stored kits were being retrieved from the backs of cupboards and the old skills tried again.

One thing that I really noticed coming back to modelling, was the huge amount of high quality kits that had become available in the intervening 20 or so years – many of them in brass. Then there was this DCC stuff – clearly there was a whole host of new skills to be acquired. The most pressing was soldering. This was something I had always shied away from, so I purchased Iain Rice’s Etched Loco Construction book by Wild Swan and with the book in one hand and a soldering iron in the other, I taught myself to solder. I would commend the book to any beginner (still available new for £11.95 or second hand from Abe books at £8.00 - ISBN0906867). I used Connoisseur wagon kits for starters, then moved onto a D&S van and then, and only then, made a simple 0-4-2 Perseverance chassis for a 14XX.

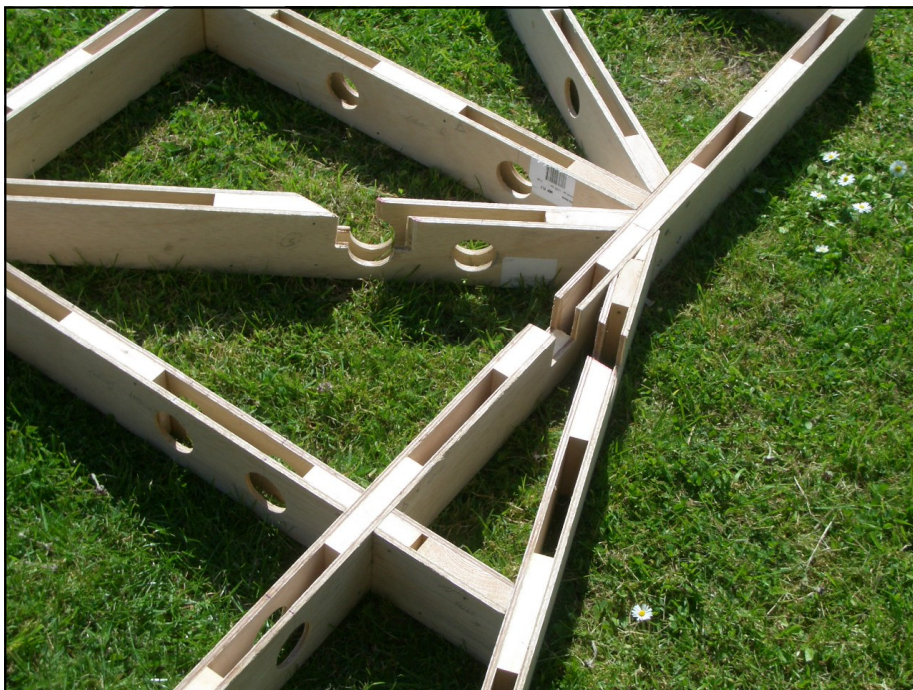
Over the next few years I concentrated on building rolling stock and

considering options for the layout. I had previously modelled in EM (stands for 'easier to model'!) and saw no reason to change. Having considered and rejected the loft (too much expense to insulate and I would have had to move the water tank), I eventually opted for a large shed in the garden (22' x 12'). This took another year to order, sort the footings, insulate, wire and paint the interior etc.

However since the spring of this year, I have at last started baseboard construction and the scenic ones are now complete. The pictures illustrate the Barry Norman style of plywood beam construction – all glued and screwed together. They require wiring and final fixing of the board tops, which should happen in the next month or so.

Above: the baseboard in its shed.

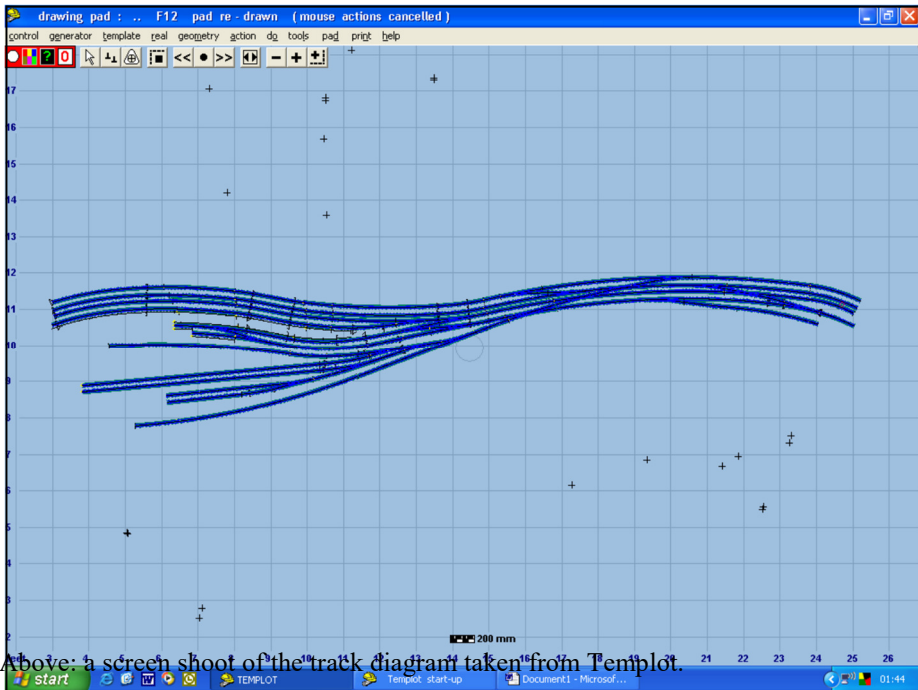




Above: a closeup of the frame construction, lightweight and rigid with holes for cables.

Clearly this a big project and I see it as a probable 20 year haul. Care has been taken in the design to allow removal in the future and expansion if a larger space becomes available. Otherwise the layout is not intended to be portable or suitable for exhibitions. The track plan has been developed on Templot and this will provide the templates for eventual building. Mastering this has taken some time but produces beautiful results. The next move will be to lay the 3mm foam trackbed. Some of you have seen the sheet I brought to the club, obtained after a bit of Yellow Page searching from Imagineers for £1 cash per sheet 1.5m x 0.5m.

Finally, why 1955? Well by then the railways had lost most of the dreary run-down wartime look and the Modernisation Plan had only just been published. The railways were, therefore, still much as they had been before the war. It's also the year of my birth so seemed as good a year as any! In reality, I suspect models will appear that were around a few years either side of that time frame.



Above: a screen shoot of the track diagram taken from Templot.

Resources:

Imagineers Ltd, Unit 6 Fryers Works, Abercromby Avenue, High Wycombe, 01494 473861.

Abe Books – clearing house for any second hand book. www.abebooks.co.uk

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