

St.Petroc - origins

Following holidays in Cornwall a group of Sheffield modellers decided they wanted their own slice of Cornwall closer to home. GWR lines were popular because they offered intensive operation in a small space using the rolling stock kits or later, RTR models that were the most readily available. Added to that there was the attraction of recreating what you had seen whilst on holiday. Having a souvenir of Cornwall running in your loft or club room had great appeal

Linking all of these trends and the increasing availability of RTR Gauge 1 locos and rolling stock prompted the creation of St. Petroc. Regular visits to SE Cornwall and the preserved railway at Bodmin in particular, coincided with retirement and the chance to acquire some G1 locos and stock from Tower Models and Bachmann. This led to thoughts of a small exhibition layout, using 2rail DC. St. Petroc is something of a rarity, being an indoor Gauge 1 2-rail fully scenic layout. Space and portability have dictated a compact terminus set in Cornwall in the mid 1940's, using mainly ready-to-run locos and coaches. They are mostly to 1/32 scale (approx. 9.5mm to foot) rather than the traditional 10mm to foot. This gives a more accurate scale to gauge ratio and fine-scale G1 (45mm) track from Cliff Barker has been used, to give a lighter appearance.

The track plan is based on Bodmin General (GWR) but an island platform was added to increase the operating interest. The prototype is quite compact so it has been possible to squeeze it onto three 5 ft baseboards plus a 6 ft fiddle yard. Bodmin General is still operational and home to the Bodmin & Wenford Steam Railway. Despite of its small size the island platform can accommodate the GW 45xx Prairie tank loco and two B-set coaches.

St. Petroc, like Bodmin, is a through station masquerading as a terminus, in that GWR trains pass through, linking the GW main line with the Withered Arm of the Southern Railway in North Cornwall.

Point control uses "Blue Motors" from EDM models in York. They are American over-centre switches controlled by compatible wire in tube rods with built-in frog polarity switching. Heavy gauge piano wire has been used to drive the points.

The buildings are all scratch built by a gentleman called Tony Massey. Whilst they are based on Bodmin they are in semi-low relief to save space but with a full canopy, anticipating the preservation era at Bodmin.

Given the simplicity of the track plan it is fully signaled with a starter and bracket plus 2 ground signals albeit one being a double. The semaphores are all from MSE kits but the ground signals are scratch built with mechanisms using model aircraft control rods and cranks like the blue point motors. The downside is that not many people realise they are working so it's a good job we decided not to make the point rodding operational. The other detail feature that does not get noticed are the fully rigged telegraph poles for which we used a product called Eeziline, which is an elastic filament, from the USA.

For a number of reasons the layout was available for sale at the recent Gauge1 exhibition and subsequently found its way to its new home here at Mt Edgcumbe.

St Petroc

Photography by Derek Shore

In common with many before them, the railways of Cornwall – particularly the branch to the former county town of Bodmin – captivated **JOHN GREEN & TONY MASSEY** of the Sheffield Model Railway Enthusiasts: so much so that this Gauge 1 exhibition layout was the result. The project has a kindred spirit in the club's O gauge Withered Arm layout Tintagel (see RM April 2005).

The cliché that might be the best description of our experience of building *St Petroc* is 'back to the future'. As readers of the RAILWAY MODELLER since the 1950s, we remember the time when most of the Railways of the Month were west country branch line termini, and the graphic artists at Peco tried to persuade us to build Wonderful Wagons whilst sitting on our holiday beach. We have enough trouble losing small parts to that 'great kit between the

floorboards' of our club room, let alone Seaton beach!

But there were good reasons those GWR branch lines were so popular. They offered intensive operation in a small space using the rolling stock kits or later, R-T-R models that were the most readily available. Added to that there was the attraction of recreating what you had seen whilst on holiday. Railways in holiday areas always seemed more interesting than what was on your doorstep. John's boyhood holidays in North Wales, watching the Ffestiniog Railway being

revived, gave him a lifelong interest in narrow gauge railways.

Having a souvenir of Cornwall running in your loft or club room has great appeal – or rather it did – but after many years of decline, Cornwall has become popular again, with the renaissance of 'holidays at

The 57xx shunts the goods shed road, which can be accessed from the fiddle yard allowing hand shunting of wagons. The Terrier is on loan, representing another attempt to find a loco with low axle loading for the mineral branch.





▲ The well tank awaits the signal and return to the mineral branch which is its home.

home' and the popularity of Rick Stein's Padstow in North Cornwall. This seems to have coincided with modellers' interests, as witnessed by the popularity of Withered Arm layouts, including our own *Tintagel*.

Scale and gauge considerations

This history, coupled with the increasing availability of R-T-R Gauge 1 locos and rolling stock, prompted the creation of *St Petroc*. Regular visits to south-east Cornwall and the preserved railway at Bodmin in particular, coincided with retirement and the chance to acquire some G1 locos and stock from Tower Models and Bachmann.

This led to thoughts of a small exhibition layout, using two-rail dc. *St Petroc* is something of a rarity, being an indoor Gauge 1 two-rail fully scenic layout. Space and portability have dictated a compact terminus set in Cornwall in the mid 1940s, using mainly ready-to-run locos and coaches. They are mostly to 1:32 scale (approx. 9.5mm to the foot) rather than the traditional Gauge 1 scale of 10mm to the foot. This gives a more accurate scale to gauge ratio; we have used finescale G1 (45mm) track from Cliff Barker, to give a lighter appearance.

For many of us, our first experience of Gauge 1 was probably a live steam test track at the MRC Easter exhibition or similar. Gauge 1 at 10mm to the foot is yet another scale/gauge compromise, similar to OO or TT, with a scale ratio of 1:30.5 which would mean a track gauge of nearer 47mm, rather than 45mm. This compromise doesn't really matter with the spectacle of a live steam or radio controlled battery test track layout, but things gets more complicated with a scenic layout using 1:32 locomotives so we have stuck to this scale ratio (or $\frac{3}{8}$ " to the foot) for all the scratchbuilt buildings but used 10mm scale scenic details – such as tools, barrows and people – because of availability. We would claim human variation for the slightly taller staff we have on *St Petroc*. Most of our figures are 10mm from Classic of Cleethorpes with bases that we've painted to match the platform surfaces, so we can move them around. The range includes loco crew and a fireman with a 'full English' on his shovel.

