

# THE HOLMFIRTH BRANCH

in 3 mm. scale

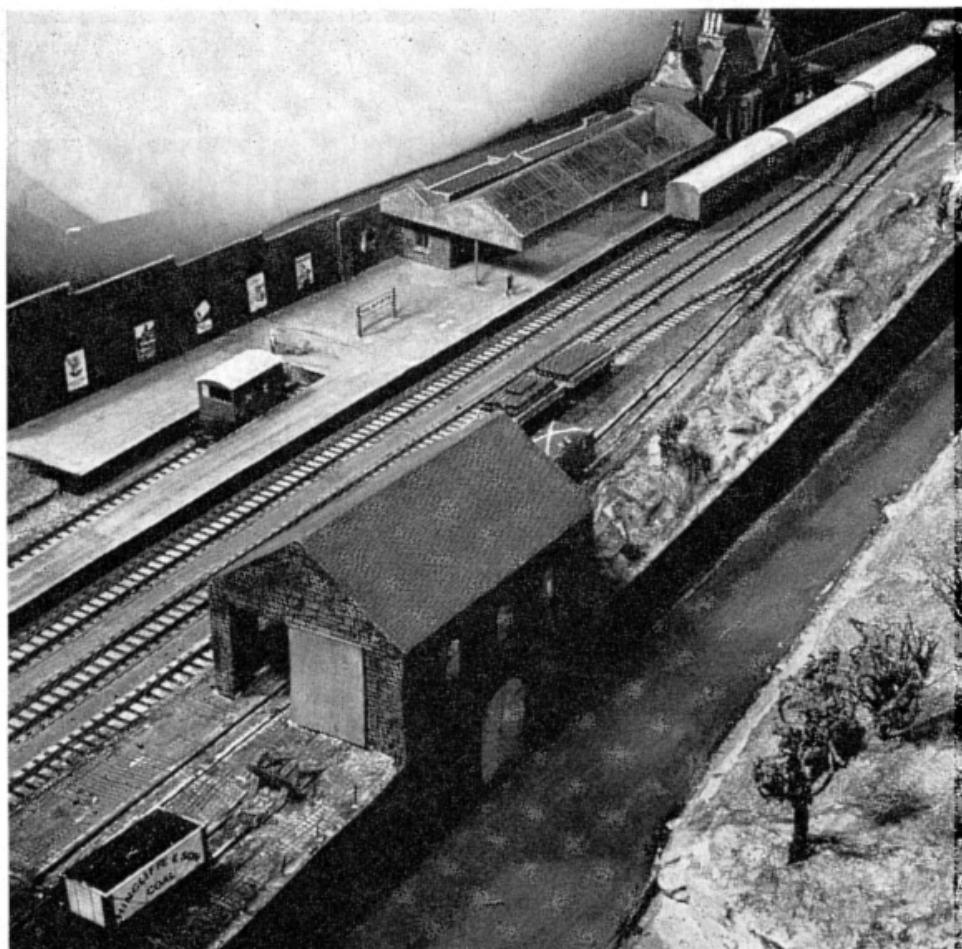
by

**D. G. Booth**

**I**N THE LATE 1950's, living on the south eastern boundary of Manchester surrounded by main lines, I could not bring myself to build a model branch line simply because I had never known one in the prototype. Then I found the Hayfield Branch (ex Great Central) and wrote to the P.R.O., Midland Region. Unfortunately, by the time I had a reply, a change of employer had resulted in a change of address.

Within weeks of my move a visit to the closed station at Holmfirth showed the buildings and track to be in fairly good repair, but nature was rapidly reclaiming the land. The P.R.O. at York was able to provide a track plan scaled 40 ft. to 1 in. and as the drawing was over 6 ft. long, I had more detail of the branch than I could possibly model





British Rail also supplied a detail drawing of the station building, which was later to prove most useful.

Armed with a fully loaded camera, sketch pad, 6 ft. tape and a B.R. permit, the next fine Saturday afternoon was spent on the site. I now had sufficient information to actually start modelling, but I was still faced with an important decision.

At 15 ft., my railway room (cellar to the non-modeller) was just long enough to model the station and yard exactly to scale length, albeit with a shortened head shunt, if I used 3 mm., rather than 4 mm. as my scale. Never before had I ventured from 4 mm., and then usually with proprietary equipment. In addition to this, the probable dampness of a cellar situation demanded plastic sleepers, but only fibre sleepers were then available in TT gauge proprietary track. I was now faced with building my own track in a gauge rapidly dwindling in popularity and with hardly any proprietary items being available. Against this was the prospect of finishing with a true scale model, not one of the squashed-down variety. Thus was the decision made to go TT.



Two baseboards existed from a previous layout, each 4 ft. by 2 ft. and as the track plan would fit on 2 ft. wide baseboards, these were retained, but their insulation board surfaces were removed, as this layout was to be built on the open plan system. Three other baseboards had to be built, each of unusual size so as to fit the railway room. The sketch gives dimensional details. On all baseboards the track bed, of  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. insulation board, was raised above the main framework on a sub-frame of  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. square strip. This was needed to give the correct height of the massive retaining wall where the access road to the yard is some 20 ft. lower than track level.

The next job was track laying. This was the most frustrating, and yet when finished, the most satisfying job on the layout. I eventually evolved what I believe to be a unique system of track construction with which my limited skills were able to cope. A description of the system is too long for this article. Sufficient to say that the trackwork is soldered and on Plastikard sleepers, and at times stretched my vocabulary to the full. Two of the points were built on the same system before the rapid approach of Wakefield R.M.S. Exhibition for 1967

Left: General view of the station, and close-up of the station buildings. Compare with photograph on page 221 of the May issue (Martin Water's article).  
Below: View of the coal drops.

gave me reason (or should it be "excuse"?) to buy Gem points.

With the track laid, a start was made on scenery. With previous layouts I had used a plaster earth mix on fabric, but this time I intended to experiment with papier-mache, and also with expanded polystyrene. The end result was a mixture of all three, with the addition of vinyl floor covering thrown in for good measure. Colouring was by powder paints, mainly brown, yellow and green, all washed with watered Indian ink to tone down the brightness. This has never been particularly satisfying and it is likely that the layout will shortly have new scenery, using a method evolved by fellow members of Huddersfield Railway Modellers, using plastic foam and scenic flock.

The position of the baseboards had been arranged so that all the yard points were on one baseboard and these were made hand-operated by means of a simple rod system, the rod being plastic-coated steel wire (ex chain link fence) running below baseboard level and soldered to a pin which in turn was soldered to the tie-bar of the point. Panel pins were used as guides for the rod and provided sufficient resistance to hold the point in a set position.

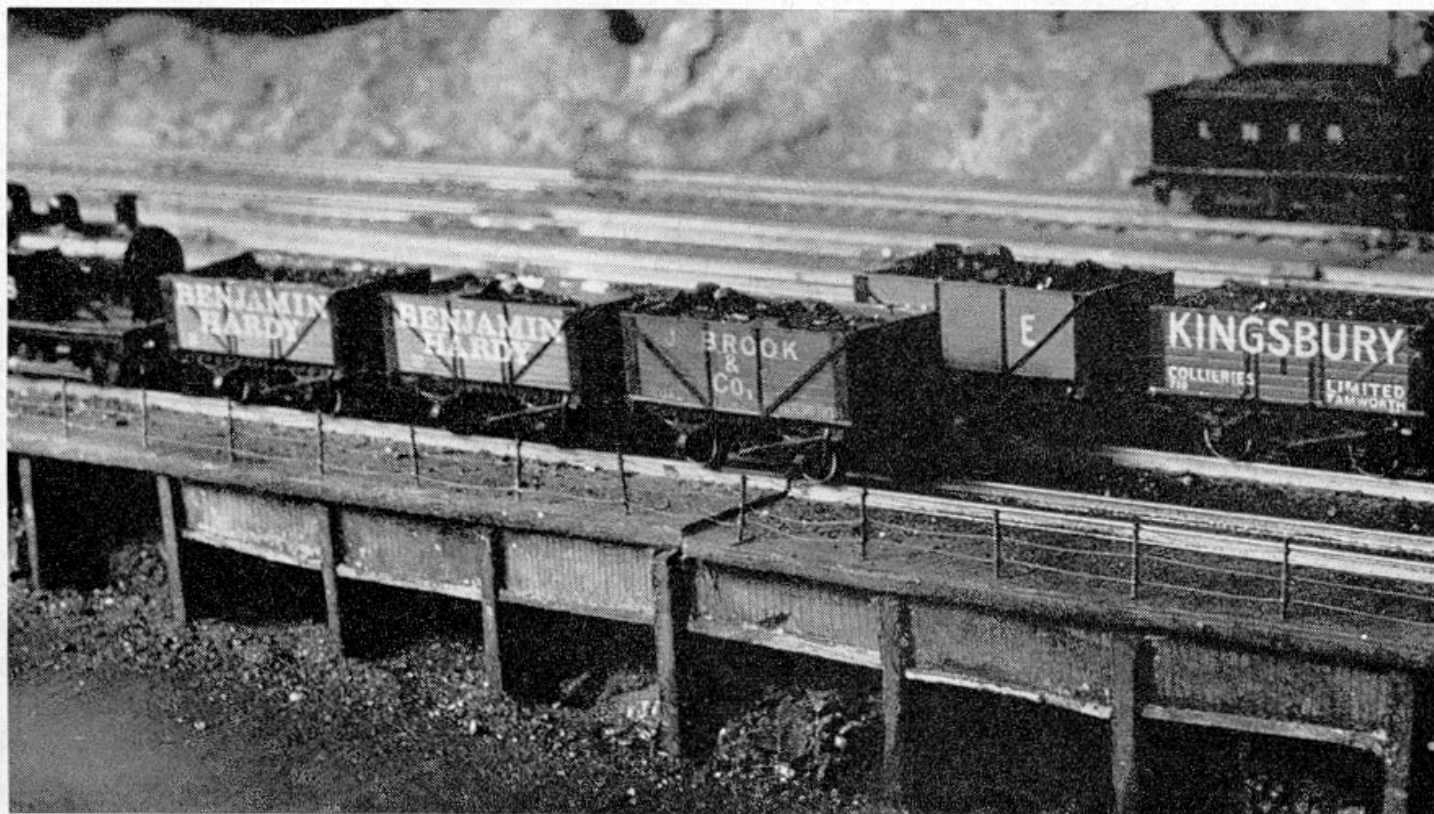
The station buildings and warehouse are constructed in the normally accepted manner from card covered with SuperQuick stone paper. This is, of course, 4 mm. paper, as no 3 mm. paper was

available. Some thought was given to individually cut and laid stones, but sanity prevailed and when the 4 mm. paper was washed with watered Indian ink, it was found to look presentable, if not ideal.

Having dimensioned and detailed drawings of the station buildings made their construction easy. It was also helpful to visit the site when I met any problem which could not easily be answered from either drawings or photographs.

The drawings started life with the L. & Y. and showed the position of the various coal offices along with the names of the companies they housed. Whilst the buildings have not yet been modelled, the fact that the occupiers' names were on the drawing led me to research into local private owner wagons. Once more, time defeated me and my scratch-built wagon bodies were painted in fictitious liveries but with the correct local names. In all probability the companies would have been too small to own their own wagons.

Without any doubt I have written more letters and spoken to more people about the signal cabin at Holmfirth than any other subject, and still I have no definite information. Ironically, when time became once more a problem, and I decided to use a Bilteezi model, the local model shops had no Bilteezi sheets in TT. Calls at all the model shops I know in Leeds, Bradford, Manchester, Sheffield, Doncaster,



and Wakefield, were all fruitless. With only a week to go, a chance visit to Baslow produced the required sheet. All things considered, Holmfirth signal box has been a big problem and still remains to be modelled.

I usually horrify the purists with my motive power rolling stock, which is basically L.N.E.R., simply because this is my preference. Martin Waters, in the May issue, listed the prototype locomotives

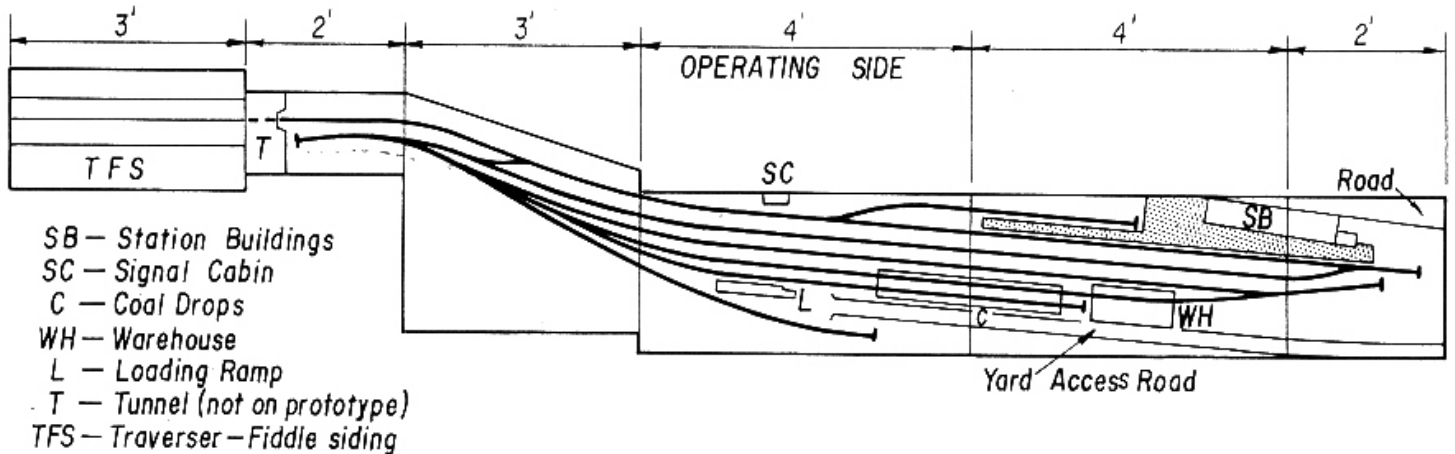
seen at Holmfirth. On the model, J50's, J11's and Jinties are used. The L.N.E.R. locomotives are Bec kits on Tri-ang chassis, and the Jinties are Tri-ang engines modified only by being painted in L.M.S. livery. Rolling stock is modified Tri-ang or scratch-built on Peco chassis.

In my view, most modellers do not realise their own abilities and are therefore unwilling to try some jobs. This certainly applied to me,

but my change to TT forced me to try many tasks which I had hitherto considered beyond my capabilities. My advice now is "Have a bash and surprise yourself, because you are as good as the next bloke."

My thanks are due to Brian Monaghan for the pictures, fellow members of Wakefield R.M.S. and Huddersfield A.R.M. for their encouragement, Martin Waters and our Editor for asking me to write the article, and you for reading it.

HOLMFIRTH BRANCH IN 3mm



- Several mistakes appeared in the layout plans illustrating Martin Waters article in May issue.
1. At BROCKHOLES, connection from down line to siding crosses up line by a single slip.
  2. At THONGSBRIDGE, connection from up line to sidings crosses down line by a single slip.
  3. At HOLMFIRTH, warehouse siding is taken off DOWN line, crosses up line by single slip.