

N-gauge at Manchester

They gave you Grandsmoor Central, they gave you the Isle of Man, now they give you N-gauge!

Photos by Brian Monaghan

THE trouble with building layouts for exhibitions is that the public are always wanting a change. Often a layout cannot be carried to its ultimate development on this account, simply because a layout at a show has not only got to be different, but must be seen to be different. To the private modeller this can be a very expensive business, especially when one thinks in terms of a layout.

Those of you who visit the Corn Exchange regularly will appreciate what this has cost my two colleagues and I over the years. This is where club membership is an advantage. For instance, we could never have afforded a large layout such as the I.-o.-M. layout had it not been for other members joining in to share both cost and work. Even a layout such as this cannot be shown too many times, and even as I write this negotiations are in progress for the sale of the layout, as space is at a premium, especially as there is a new gauge to build in. Here again the club has come to the rescue and has promised to sponsor the layout if the members of the group are prepared to provide the rolling stock. Thus the M.M.R.S. now has a keen N-Gauge Group working hard to build a layout in time for the Christmas Show.

Regular readers will remember that in March my two sons wrote an article about a

small N-gauge layout which they built for last year's show. This is now being rebuilt and will eventually be incorporated in the larger layout under construction.

The layout to be shown this year will be 6ft. 9in. x 4ft. 3in.

Since the days of Grandsmoor Central we have always used baseboards of a standard size, 4ft. 6in. x 2ft. 3in., and this new layout is built on three of these boards, two of which are placed side by side with one across the end making a board to the sizes mentioned above.

The layout is based on a main-line station having four through roads, the outside two serving the up and down platforms. In order to run an intensive service we decided to make the layout with automatic train control, such as we had on the Grandsmoor Central layout. With this system of control we are able to run nine trains, with four others in storage on the two centre roads of the station. Both these roads have been divided into two sections to enable this to take place. This adds to the interest from the spectators' point of view as the sequence of the trains can be altered at will.

The photographs show what is the first of a four-stage development. The ultimate aim

is to have a layout in four parts which can be used as one large layout or as four separate layouts of varying character and size. The automatic system can also be used as a whole or as four separate units on each of the four layouts. This is a useful arrangement for several reasons. First, it makes us very versatile where exhibitions are concerned, and it also enables several layouts to be operative at once, giving group members engaged in producing rolling stock and locos the advantage of having a layout which is easily portable and can be taken to the site where the work is taking place.

It is planned that one-half of the layout, that is of the whole layout, will be British and the other half Continental. This will make it possible to run both types of rolling stock as we intend to beat the Government in building the Channel Tunnel.

Of the plans shown only No. 1 board is a reality. The other plans are only tentative and are subject to modification or even complete redrafting. The only reason for publishing them is to show what is possible. As a point of interest it takes a train 4 min. to complete a circuit of the present layout.

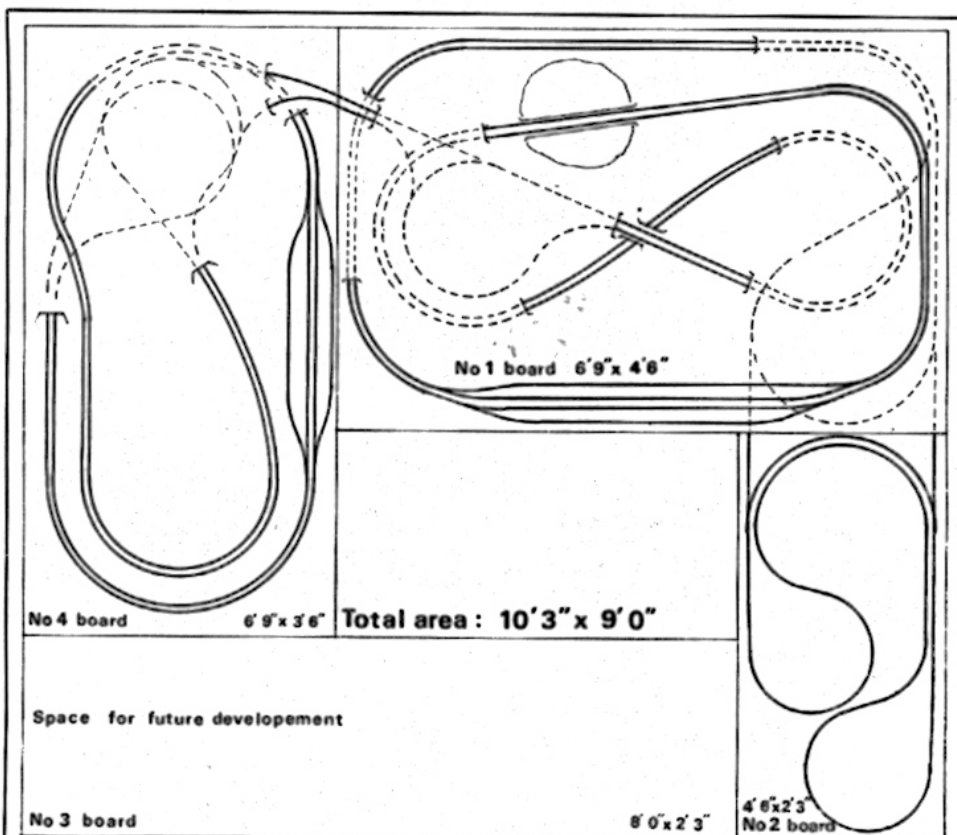
A set of photographs such as those published with this article are an invaluable asset to the modeller as they reveal many faults than can easily be passed over and which detract from the appearance of the layout. For instance, a close scrutiny of the pictures will reveal that there are gaps beneath the rail-joints, which do a great deal to detract from the realistic appearance of the layout. A fault such as this is often overlooked as a modeller is often satisfied once satisfactory running is achieved. Another thing which shows up clearly on a photograph is the gap between the bottom of a building and the baseboard. This can easily be remedied with a fillet of Plasticine, preferably grey. A coat of glue with a little sawdust or flock sprinkled over it will hide the gap and also give an impression of grass and weeds which often grow in this environment. If the buildings are part of a town where one might not find grass or weeds—a footpath can be added later to mask the gap.

At the moment all our rolling stock and locos are of Continental outline. We do, however, hope to remedy this later with the use of kits that are becoming available and also by scratch-building on existing chassis, and also on the lines of the article written by G. P. Middleton in the September RAILWAY MODELLER. The 2-6-4T by Arnolds makes an admirable basis for a G.C.R. 2-6-4T, besides the Fairburn body produced by PECO.

Scenic work has been built up by conventional methods, but one or two experiments have been tried out. We have developed a new earth mix, which has proved very successful. It consists of a mixture of cork dust, Hardwall and tile cement with a little colouring matter thrown in. This gives a very hard and durable surface. The lake is simply a piece of ripple-glass with a suitably painted and sanded bottom. The bridge piers have been modelled below the surface of the water giving an authentic look to the structure.

The group would appreciate the help of any reader who might be able to supply pictures or drawings of Continental stations, buildings, etc., which would assist us to produce a convincing environment for this part of the layout.

JIM LAWTON



Plan of layout

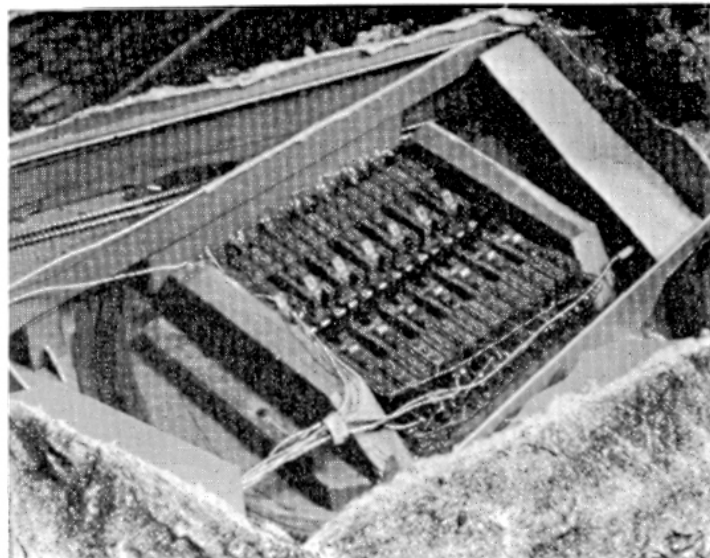
Note: The plan above is that given us by Jim Lawton in late September, and excepting No. 1 board, may bear little resemblance to the model exhibited at the Corn Exchange. With this group anything can happen—and usually does.



View of layout, taken from a helicopter hovering behind the castle. Town planning is taking place in the far distance, the buildings should be up by now.

Our lead photo on page 359 shows the view enjoyed from the castle battlements. The total area is only 6ft. 9in. x 4ft. 3in., demonstrating the scope of N gauge.

The electronic brain that controls the layout. When on view, all this will be hidden by a removable section of scenery. It formerly controlled Grandsmoor Central.



The method of scenery construction is plainly seen. The buildings on the far side of the bridge are typical North Country designs. Trees are made from florist's wire and lichen.

**See this at the Corn Exchange
December 16th, 17th, 18th**

Castle Hill, overlooking the lake. Note the bridge piers extended below the "water-line" of the lake. The roads are, as yet, unmade.

