

Abbey Light Railway

Peco Product Design Lead **DAVID MALTON** has further extended and improved his O-14 model of the former 2' gauge railway in Leeds where he was a volunteer.

Photography by Craig Tiley



When I extended my layout from a single board depicting the top station (*The Abbey End*, see *RAILWAY MODELLER* June 2015) to also feature the Mill Race bridge scene and the yard outside the sheds at the other end of the line (*Abbey Light Railway*, see *RM* November 2019), the three sections were dioramas of distinctly different locations along the line, and trains passed between them on the layout through holes cut in the backscenes. In the yard, the sheds were modelled in low relief against the

backscene and their open doors were entrances to the fiddle yard behind. It did allow the increased operational interest I was looking for, but the way the neighbouring part of the layout or the interior of the fiddle yard always ended up visible through the backscenes was a constant irritation that, in my opinion, spoiled all but the most carefully angled photos taken of the layout.

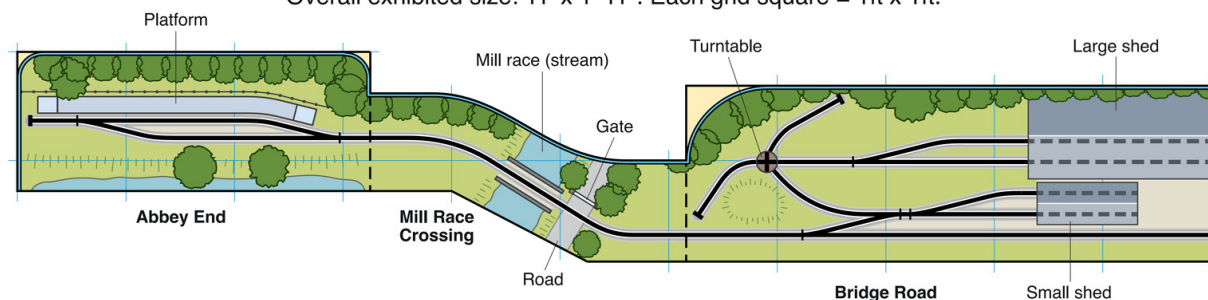
I therefore decided to extend the layout again with the aim of solving this issue.

▲ Six of the layout's diesel locomotive fleet are seen outside the sheds.

I rebuilt the bridge section to include a shortened impression of the whole route, including a more accurately proportioned rendition of the bridge. The Abbey Light Railway was mostly in woodland, so I have used trees as view blockers so you can't see it all at once and to give the illusion of greater distance. The track no longer passes through any backscenes and the background

ABBAY LIGHT RAILWAY

Overall exhibited size: 11' x 1' 11". Each grid square = 1ft x 1ft.





▲ An overall view of the large shed interior. The details modelled are described in the text.



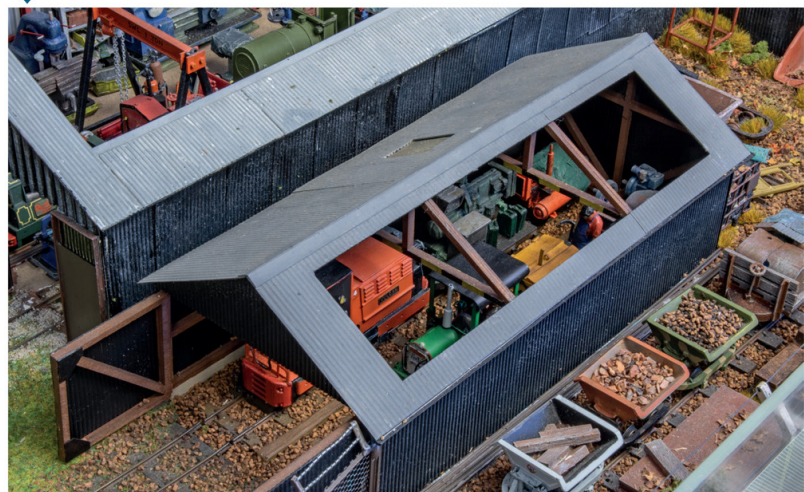
▲ The shed road nearest the camera was used to stable the ALR passenger coach rake.

to any photo is just more scenery. I also extended the yard board to make room for full-length models of the previously low-relief sheds, and dispensed with the fiddle yard altogether. The sheds are modelled with their roofs missing to enable the viewer to see the fully detailed interiors. I can still park out-of-use locomotives and rolling stock in them as I could in the fiddle yard, but now they are still part of the scene rather than being hidden completely from view (which seems a shame after all the effort put into building them). The sheds of the ALR were quite unique and I spent a lot of time there when I was a volunteer, so it has taken effort and time to make them and their contents look as I remember.

History

On the real ALR, the small wooden-framed shed clad with corrugated iron was built

▲ An overall view of the small shed, with the vehicles inside including the generator wagon.



first when the railway was founded in the early 1970s, but was soon outgrown, and a big steel-framed shed was built beside it. The two sheds and the fenced-off compound beside them were home to the entire collection of rolling stock, a workshop with various old machine tools, a solitary Ransomes MG crawler dumper truck, stocks of all types of material for building and repairing things, and many other random items that may have come in useful one day. Every available space was occupied and it was rarely tidied, so it constantly had a very cluttered appearance that I have aimed for on the model. It probably wouldn't have passed any Health & Safety audits, but we seemed to get away with it.

The whole railway was 'off-grid', so a diesel generator in the back of the little shed provided electricity and a tank in the compound collected rainwater from the roof. Heating was provided by a wood-burning stove in the corner of the big shed. Many hours were spent around that stove putting the world to rights before and after running the railway. If the weather was particularly foul, that was all we'd do!

Operation

The sheds were positioned between the yard and Bridge Road station which was previously represented by the fiddle yard, but without it I have had to change the normal mode of operation for the layout. The passenger train still trundles up to the Abbey end and back, but must now stop in the yard, whereupon another loco is moved out of the yard and onto the top end of the coaches to haul the next round trip. This is how we did it for real on the occasions when the ALR played host to various visiting groups and societies. It was quite a game to shuffle the locos around the yard so that a different one was on the passenger train each time, but it kept ourselves and our visitors entertained, as it does on the layout.

Modelling

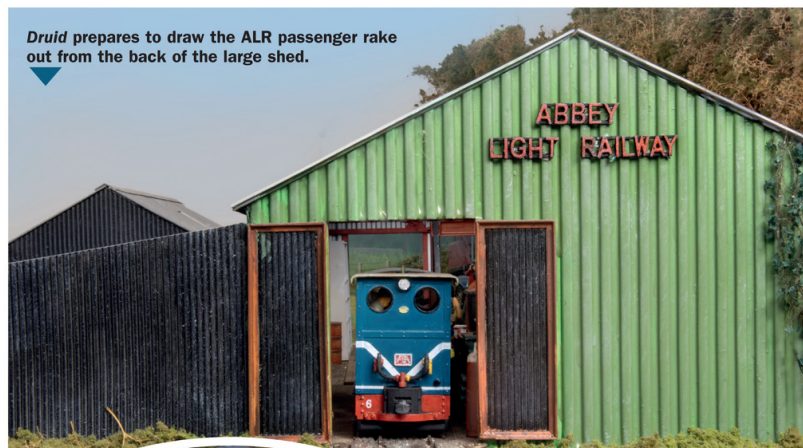
Modelling the shed interiors proved quite a challenge as most of the photos in my collection were taken outside, so a lot of it was done from memory. With only a handful of volunteers at the best of times, there are very few people in the world who can tell me it's wrong, but for my own satisfaction I've tried to make it as close as I remember.

The sheds themselves are made from corrugated plasticard over a frame of square section styrene strip for the small shed, and over a laser-cut plywood representation of the steel frame of the large shed. Being 14mm gauge, the track through the sheds is hand-made as it is on the rest of the layout, and is divided into sections to allow locos to be isolated in various positions. The sections are marked by yellow oil drums next to the track to help position locos within them.

Once the buildings were made, I began making various items of furniture and machine tools to fill them. Some are scratch-built from plasticard, other bits are whitmetal kits from various suppliers and others are 3D-printed, although I did all the design work myself. There was a period during the build when work to the house took priority, and physical progress was halted while the builders were in and my layout shed used to store our furniture. However, part of the beauty of 3D design was that I was able to continue designing things for the layout while we were temporarily moved out, and I simply had to press print on my 3D printer when we finally got back into our house.

There are too many individual models in the sheds to mention everything, but the following are those I'm most pleased with:

The Ransomes MG crawler dumper truck: the prototype was acquired to assist in the construction of the railway, but spent most of its time parked across the track at the end of the shed. It did occasionally come outside for a play, and I had taken some good photos of it, which I used to build the model.



Druid prepares to draw the ALR passenger rake out from the back of the large shed.



The little Ruston and crane wagon retrieve items from the compound behind the small shed.

Gavin's miniature railway: Gavin Lowe, the youngest son of the railway's owner Peter Lowe, used to store his portable 7¼" gauge track and equipment at the railway. I've used lengths of Peco Z gauge track to represent a stack of track panels, and 3D-printed representations of some of his rolling stock and his battery-powered armoured Simplex loco.

The workbench: this was the first scratch-built plasticard furniture I made for the shed. I didn't have any measurements, but I think I got the proportions spot-on. If anything it is too tidy, however.

The milling machine and lathe: the milling machine has a 3D-printed main body, but all the details and the bed are scratch-built in plasticard, as is the entirety of one of the big lathes.

The generator: mounted on a flat wagon, the big diesel generator provided power for the machine tools when required. A much smaller petrol generator was used if only the lights were required. Although theoretically mobile, it was permanently at the back of the little shed with its exhaust pipe plumbed through a hole in the roof. For some reason

this had been done with a very rarely used and similarly wagon-mounted diesel air compressor trapped behind it. Both are modelled and fixed to the layout.

The Baguley and the Muir Hill: these two locos were forever waiting their turn in the restoration queue and spent many years out in the compound. In the latter years of the ALR the Muir Hill chassis was dismantled, moved to a flat wagon and painted, and the Baguley was moved into the big shed. The Baguley is made from test prints and spare parts from when I made my working model of its sister, which we did restore. The Muir Hill chassis is from a Nonneminstre kit. It has a pile of steel sheets on top of it to keep the worst of the weather off it (and as somewhere to keep the steel sheets), as the real one did.

Recalling a lost railway

As the ALR only had a handful of active volunteers and closed over a decade ago in 2012, I could claim the sheds are complete and nobody would be able to dispute it. However, as is the case with most layouts, it's never finished, and adding more details and clutter to make it just how I remember will keep me busy for many years to come.

Warley at Statfold

The Abbey Light Railway is due to appear at the Warley Model Railway Club 2024 exhibition, to be held at Statfold Country Park on 12 & 13 October. For more details, see Societies & Clubs, or visit: www.thewarleyshow.co.uk

