



ENGINE WOOD - BUILDING THE MODEL

Baseboards: The baseboards are a bit of a mixture in terms of age, design and materials used. The original baseboards were built in 1977 for a GWR layout that was never to be completed. They consist of a Sundeala top firmly fixed to 1"x1" pine frames. This forms a stable and good surface to work on but is rather limiting if you need to build an underbridge or embankment. In the end I kept the Sundeala surface on the main station baseboard and just re-used the frames of the others with a more 'modern' open frame design.

The need to make Engine Wood fully portable has resulted in one or two other features, such as hinged 'doors' on the underside of the baseboards to protect the wiring. Subsequent layouts like Bleakhouse Road also feature hinged legs, as this gives you one less separate item to worry about when transporting the layout.

Two of the three scenic boards are 4' long, which makes them quite portable, but the main station board is 6' long and rather heavy. All this means that Engine Wood is a relatively difficult layout to move around, a point not lost on me when I designed Bleakhouse Road and subsequent projects.

Track: The track work on Engine Wood reflects its mixed heritage, being a combination of 'old' SMP, 'new' SMP and C&L. I prefer the latter due to the excellent quality of the chair mouldings and the fact that the inside of the chair is scale size. I have tried to use C&L track on all running lines and the SMP in the sidings. All track is laid on 1/16" cork underlay with edges chamfered where a ballast shoulder is required.

More information on tracklaying can be found on the [Construction](#) page.

Electrics - keep it simple!

I generally find electrical things difficult. In fact, it's a wonder that anything electrical designed by me works at all. The only way I can manage it, is to keep things simple and deal with one wire at a time. I shudder to think what would happen if I tried my hand at DCC, although I have been assured by many that it's easy!

The layout is divided up into a number of isolating sections, which ensure that I can make all the shunting movements demanded by the 'timetable'. The control panel is removable from the main baseboard for transport purposes. Individual switches control the isolating sections. Points are controlled by push buttons, which operated by Seep point motors which also change the electrical polarity. Power is fed to one of two locations on the layout, depending which movement is being made. A DPDT switch enables the operator to choose the desired feed. The four signals are also operated by Seep point motors, mounted at 90 degrees to the normal on aluminium angle iron under the baseboards.

A basic Gaugemaster controller supplies 16v AC for the points and signals and 12v DC for the trains. I also have an AMR hand-held controller, which for several locomotives provides a better degree of control. Another DPDT switch enables the operator to choose which control unit to use.

Scenery: There is very little that is original in my scenic techniques. Most of what I have done was picked up over the years from a variety of sources, but one of the very best books on model landscape construction is 'Landscape Modelling' by Barry Norman (Wild Swan). I can thoroughly

recommend this book for anyone who wants to go beyond the 'dyed sawdust' stage of scenery construction.



Scenery under construction in the 1980s



The layout under construction in the garage in 1994

Most of the landscaping is done by creating a card or fine chicken wire shape and applying two or three layers of dampened strips of newspaper soaked in a mixture of Polyfilla and white PVA glue, with a brown powder paint added to give an overall 'earth' colour. When that has dried off I usually apply a further coat or two of the Polyfilla and glue mix. This provides the basic 'shell' for the landscape. I then paint the landscape with a wash of umber or similar water colour, depending on the base colour of the soil and rocks in the area. When this has all thoroughly dried out, I am ready to add grass, foliage and other scenic features. Information on creating grass effects and foliage can be found on the [Construction](#) page.



*Very early shot of 76027 taken in the 1980s, showing the former 005 yard in position
(Photo - Author)*



*Later shot showing (co-incidentally) the same loco emerging from Engine Wood tunnel
(Photo - Peco)*



48706 waiting the road



4MT 75023 arriving at Engine Wood (Photo - Peco)

Buildings and structures : Most of the buildings on Engine Wood had to be scratchbuilt, such as the main station building, the platform shelter and the signalbox. I was able to use a Wills kit for the lock-up goods shed and a Ratio kit for the concrete PW hut. The signalbox was actually scratchbuilt by Simon Castens for his Camerton layout but as it is a standard S&D pattern box, it fitted my needs for Engine Wood and he was kind enough to loan it to me. Eight years on and I still haven't built a replacement!





All the scratchbuilt buildings are made from styrene sheet. The station building has individual slate strips made of thin paper. The bridges are also scratchbuilt from styrene sheet, whereas the tunnel mouth was constructed and put in position much earlier. It is made from balsa with a plaster covering, onto which stonework has been scribed and then painted with watercolours.

Since the original Railway Modeller articles and the photos were taken, I have installed working signals. These are mostly built from M.S.E. components, although the Up Home signal has a scratchbuilt S.R. type rail-built post.

Operations - real and model: A number of the operational practices from the 1959 - 1964 era are reproduced on the layout, such as the running of the 6.05 pm Bristol TM to Engine Wood local. This was latterly formed of a single coach, usually hauled by a BR Standard Class 3 tank, which ran round in Engine Wood station before returning, usually empty to Bristol TM. It was mainly provided for commuters returning to Camerton and Dunkerton and could not proceed beyond Engine Wood due to pathing problems on the S&D main line at Midford Junction.



Engine Wood at the Edington Show in December 1995



Something is clearly fascinating everyone! Exeter 1998

Another operation unique to that part of North Somerset was the use of the NCBs shunting engine to bring loaded coal wagons out from Camerton Colliery to the Exchange Siding at Engine Wood, the Sectional Appendix officially permitting the NCB loco to run over BR metals as far as Engine Wood's 'station limits'. This peculiar move dated from the days when the collieries were privately owned and it was a necessary manoeuvre for north-bound coal trains from the colliery towards Bristol, as the connection to the main line at Camerton faced east and was over 600 yards outside the protection of the home signal. It was controlled by a ground frame released by the electric token but had no run-

round facilities. Propelling out of the Colliery Siding was not allowed either due to the gradients, so all north-bound coal trains had to continue on to engine Wood to run-round. Due to limited space and tight clearances in the colliery yard it was not always practicable to diagram a main line loco to take loaded trains away when it suited the coal owners, so it was agreed that the colliery loco could take traffic as far as Engine Wood as and when required. This agreement was perpetuated by British Railways and the National Coal Board until the closure of Camerton Colliery in 1965.

In 1958 B.R. decided to re-route the 3.45 pm Bournemouth Mails via Engine Wood. This train had priority over every other service on the S&D due to its need to make a connection with a north-bound service at Mangotsfield. By running it via Engine Wood the authorities found that a more reliable connection could actually be made at Bristol Temple Meads, thus effecting a modest staffing economy at Mangotsfield in the process.

I try to replicate all of the above operations in model form when exhibiting the layout. Most stopping passenger trains are composed of two or three coaches plus a parcels van. Pick-up goods trains serve the modest goods yard, mainly in the down direction as this made life easier for the train crews. The coal trains from Camerton Colliery are depicted with rakes of weather-beaten mineral wagons.

I use three and screw link couplings on both Engine Wood and Bleakhouse Road. Maybe one day I'll convert these to some kind of automatic coupling, but for the time being I am happy that they look better and I do like the ability to 'slacken off' the couplings on a long loose-coupled goods train and then slowly re-start the train in a prototype manner, with the driver being careful not to give the guard a sudden jerk when he gets going!

I try to stick to scale speeds when operating the layout, especially when shunting. It is interesting to remember that drivers of shunting locos did not always crawl along at a scale walking pace, they frequently opened their machines up and gave the stock a clout, especially if they were in a hurry to get back to the depot and book off!

Much of the text of this page has been reproduced from the articles in Railway Modeller in November and December 1996. My thanks to Peco for their support and agreement for this.



44422 crossing the Cam Brook on the extended part of the layout. The scenic section used to end where the tender and the first mineral wagon are coupled. The photo was taken in the garden on a nice sunny day.



Trains crossing at Engine Wood, while 44422 waits in the yard.
Photo: Chris Nevard, courtesy Hornby Magazine



A class 14 diesel-hydraulic approaches Engine Wood with an up van train. *Photo: Chris Nevard, courtesy Hornby Magazine*



Jinty 47316 slowly plods through the station with an engineer's train from Bristol to Radstock prior to some weekend work (*Photo - Peco*)



The NCB loco 'Buntie' and brake van pose on the river bridge over the Cam Brook. This was technically outside the limit of permitted operation for the NCB engine. The loco is a Barclay design and was scratchbuilt by Brian Clarke. (*Photo - Peco*)

Hymek D7039 has arrived from Bristol and has been shunted to wait outside the Down Home signal for the NCB loco to finish positioning a rake of loaded mineral wagons for onwards transit to Portishead Power Station (*Photo - Peco*)



48706 shunts a coal train. *Photo: Chris Nevard, courtesy Hornby Magazine*



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