

The Kentside Branch

Welcome to my world! Some of you may recall the original Kentside exhibition layout that was on the show circuit around 15 years ago. Well, what is developing now as my permanent layout is essentially an expansion of that theme. To recap on what the original layout represented, essentially a sort of an alternate reality which saw a station representative of the Furness Railway's Lakeside Branch, transposed onto the route of that company's Arnside-Hincaster line. It was meant to be situated at the location of the real Sandside station; the reason for the change was primarily because it was always intended to be a 'test track/minimum space' sort of affair and Sandside itself was way too big to be modelled itself. Plus, I really like the Lakeside Branch architecture!



Scratchbuilt Metro-Vick Co-Bo on the original Kentside layout

When Kentside MK1 was eventually retired from the show circuit, I sold the layout but kept all of the structures with the plan in mind of building an expanded version with space for the sidings of the adjacent quarry complex. This last was a feature of Sandside which I'd also adopted for Kentside, but on the original layout these tracks were an imagined off-stage feature with just a run-round of the quarry trains being the only move taking place on the layout itself.

I did arrive at a detailed design for Kentside MK2, but then got distracted into building Hebble Vale Goods, by which time we'd moved house and had a large garden where it finally dawned on me that I had room for a good-sized shed in which to build a permanent layout with Kentside as its theme. As a 1970s teenager I'd been greatly influenced by David Jenkinson's "Little Long Drag" articles that appeared in the *Railway Modeller* around that time. Fast forward some 45 or so years and a latent ambition was at long last being realised as I was now in a position to commence my own layout of a lifetime! It was as though all those years in between had been building up to just this moment.

After a good amount of research I located a local company who were extremely helpful and were able to design a structure to my exact requirements. The final size was 29 feet by 11 feet, fully insulated in the floor, ceiling and walls, and all windows double-glazed. As I hope you'll agree, it looks rather smart!

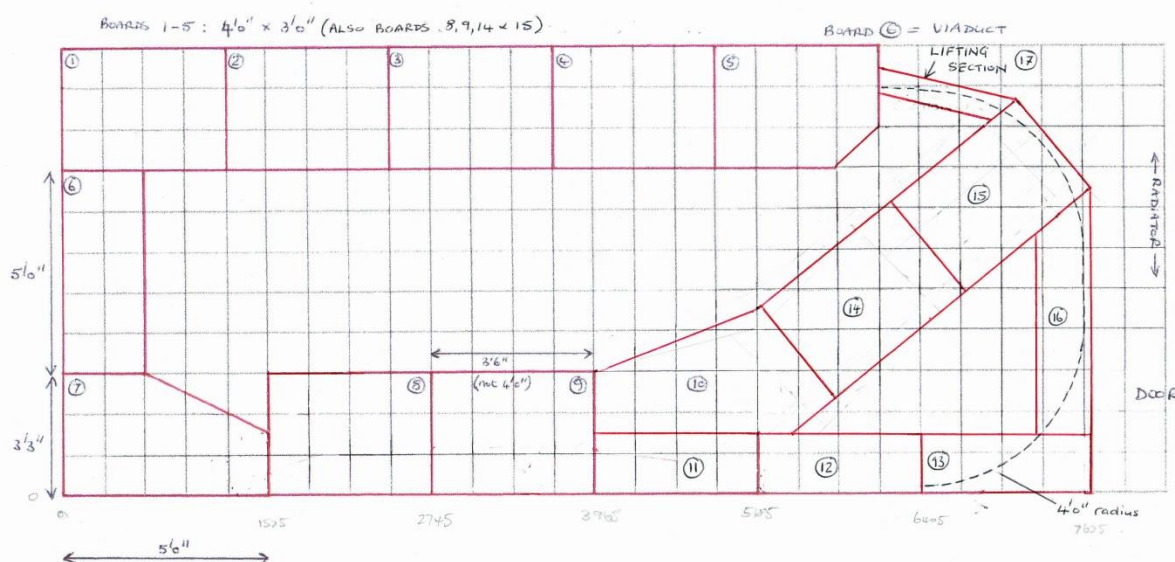


With the building now in place I could make a start on planning the layout. The floor of the structure had been lined with plywood boards and I planned eventually to lay carpet tiles onto this base. But before doing this it seemed to make sense to physically draw the outlines of the planned baseboards directly onto the shed floor, which is what I did!



Interior of the newly completed shed, with a start being made on planning the baseboards.

Having always built portable layouts in the past I decided to do likewise here, so the layout could at least be moved if the need ever arose. I standardised, as far as possible to adopt a 1220x900mm baseboard footprint (4ft x 3ft in old money). There's nothing radical about how they were built – basically 9mm birch plywood on semi-permanently fitted softwood legs. Yes they are a bit on the heavy side, but as they aren't intended to be generally portable I don't see this as too much of a problem (but ask me that again in another 20 years!).

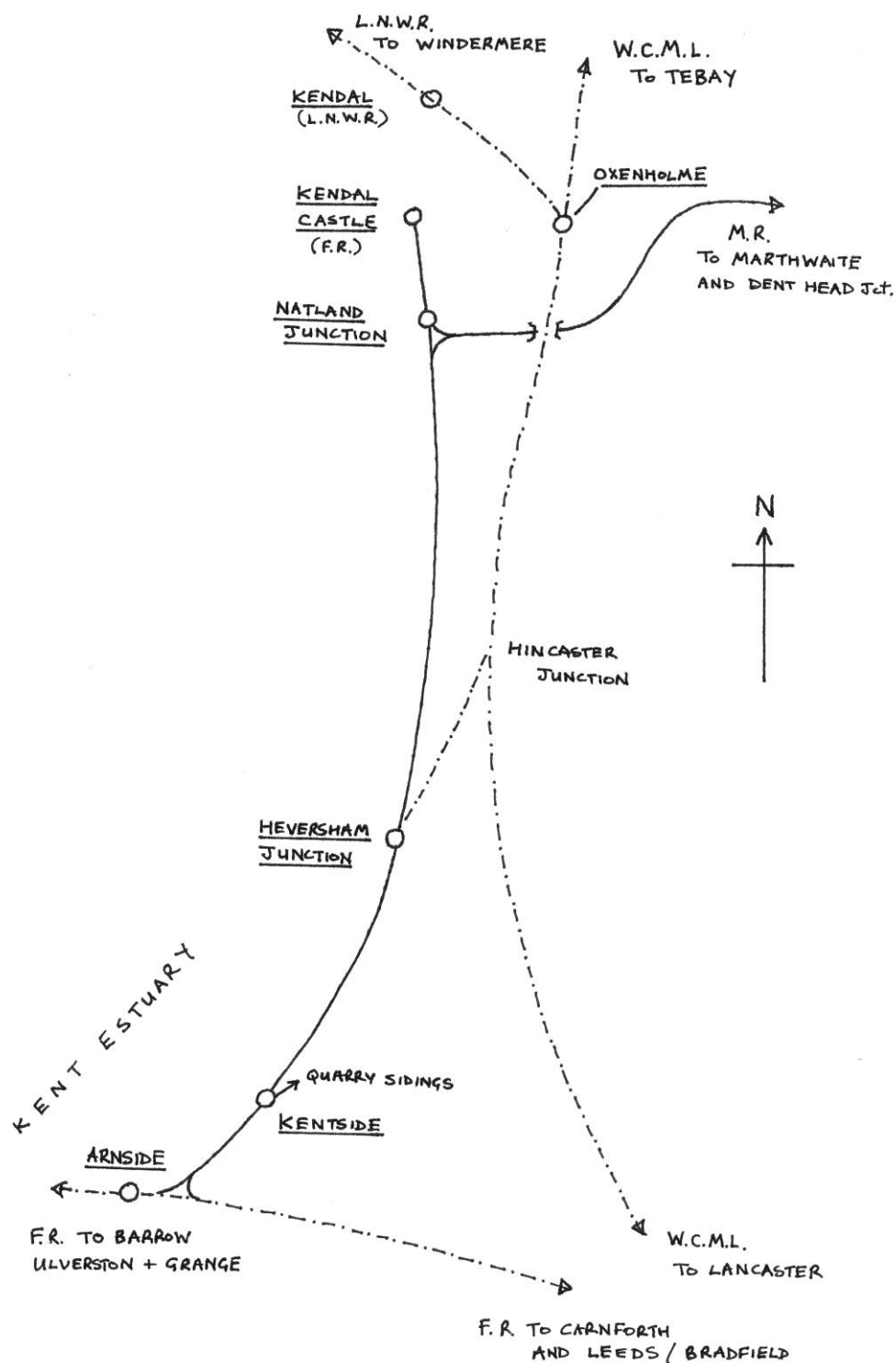


Outline of baseboards. Those along the top edge are to house Kentside Station, with the fiddle yard area occupying the baseboards across the bottom. Note the lifting section for when I'm too old to duck under!

Also you'll notice the three boards (10, 14 and 15) running diagonally to the right. On Kentside MK1 I'd always envisaged my station as being consistent with the version of reality envisaged by David Jenkinson; a Midland Railway branch from Dent Head Junction on the S&C, through Marthwaite (Sedbergh in reality) to Kendal Castle Station, and a connection southwards from Kendal forming a link with the FR's Arnside-Hincaster Branch. David built 'his' version of Kendal Castle in O gauge. My effort, which will occupy these three boards, will differ from David's in being assumed to have been built by the FR and not the Midland. Hence I needed a suitable FR station as the basis – or in truth I'd been always looking for an excuse to base a model on Lakeside and this situation fitted the bill perfectly. Thus I was to adopt the FR Lakeside station as the basis of my model of Kendal Castle (minus the bit associated with the Windermere steamers of course!).

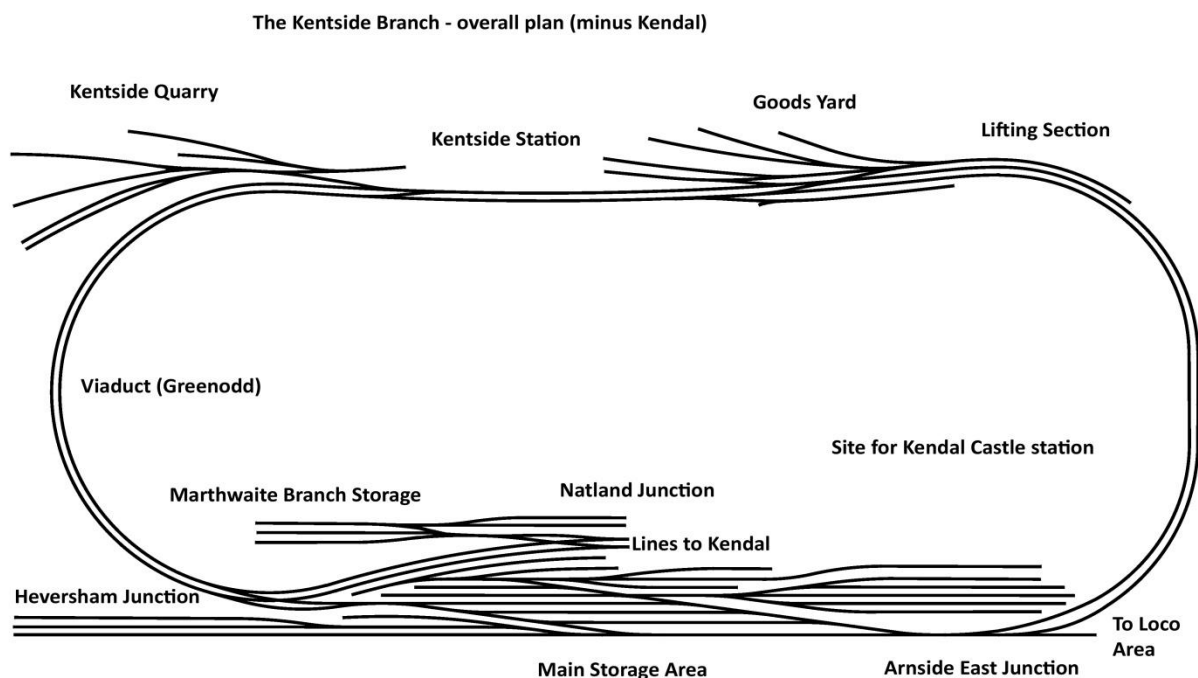
The plan below (next page) will hopefully make all this clear. The design I finally came up with will allow me to run the layout essentially in an end-to-end fashion with traffic along the branch from Arnside to and from Kendal Castle. In terms of passenger traffic I've worked on the basis of a logical link between Kendal and the West Riding, hence the triangular junction at Arnside to facilitate this traffic (and the branch is now double track, as opposed to a single line with Kentside MK 1). For these trains I've used the 'Leeds-Morecambe/Carnforths' as the basis, extending the Carnforth portions to work through to Kendal. Further passenger workings come in from both Barrow-in-Furness and Morecambe Promenade. I can also incorporate the Kendal-Marthwaite branch traffic and indeed, also those trains that only traverse the Hincaster-Heversham route and therefore don't

appear at Kendal itself (principally the Tebay-Barrow coke trains, loaded & empties). On top of this are the pickup freights (Carnforth-Dent Head Junction) and workings to and from Kentside quarry, plus the odd excursion and DCE working, so it should be fascinating to operate. Indeed I've already spent quite some time on working out a full timetable sequence.



Imagined railway geography of the area (in bold – actual lines dotted)

The plan below shows the final arrangement of the layout (apart from Kendal). You'll see that the line to Kendal actually passes through the middle of the fiddle yard, but this was a necessary compromise. It's also allowed the Heversham and Natland Junctions to be fully incorporated, albeit again 'off stage'. Note also the separate siding area for the Marthwaite/Dent Head route.



The following photo shows baseboard construction well under-way. The Kentside boards are to the right. In fact the one nearest has adapted one of the boards originally constructed (but never used) for Kentside MK2. You can also make out the Templot track plan laid out here. In the far distance can be seen the temporary structure for a viaduct to be based on Greenodd. This will initially carry plain flexi-track and the structure proper will be built at a later phase of scenic development.





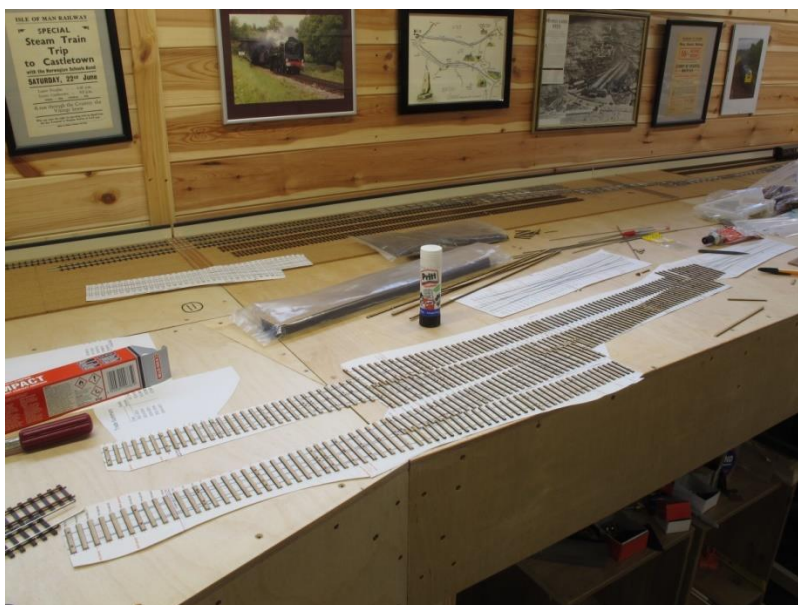
Photo above- temporary viaduct structure. The eventual model will be based on Greenodd from the Lakeside Branch, as can be seen in the photo below.



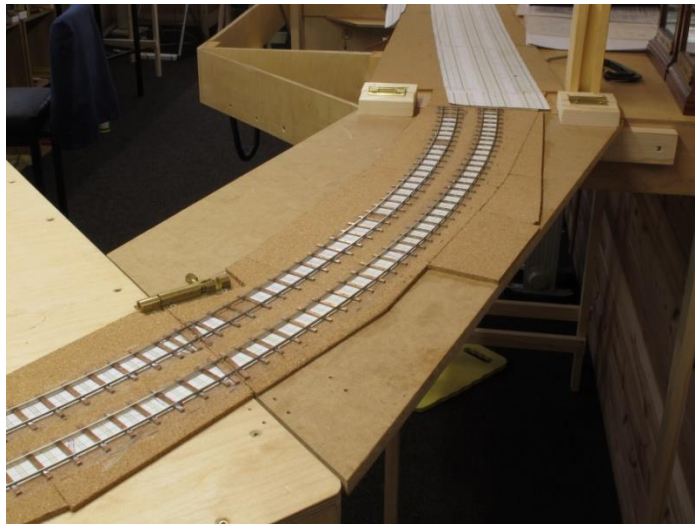
Greenodd Viaduct – photo courtesy Cumbrian Railways Association. For anyone interested in the railways of this part of the world, the CRA is to be highly recommended. Amongst other things they have an extensive archive of photographs and various documents (including fortunately, drawings and plans of the viaduct), together with the regular 'Cumbrian Railways' Journal and an active Web forum. You can find out more at www.cumbrianrailways.org.uk



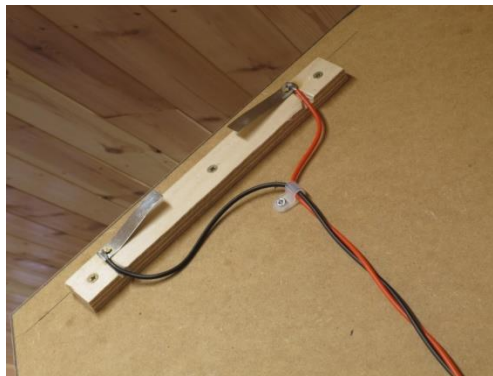
Here I've made a start on the Kentside Station pointwork. Track on the visible sections uses 1.6mm plywood sleepers/timbers in conjunction with Exactoscale and C&L chairs. For a stronger join of the plastic chairs to the wood, the latter is first coated with a layer of Polypipe Solvent Cement (follow safety advice!). In addition, for extra strength, rivets have been placed at strategic locations. To build the track, the sleepers are glued directly onto the paper Templot printouts using Evo-Stik. Once completed, the track is next painted, after which as much of the paper template as possible is then cut away. What remains of the paper template is now varnished (in case I decide to use PVA to glue the ballast and will therefore not cause the paper to swell). Finally the track is glued onto the cork base using Evo-Stik Time Bond adhesive. In the above photo, you'll notice the cut-away portion at the front, this to allow me to model the edge of the Kent Estuary in front of Kentside station. Also you can see a start has been made on the DCC Bus wiring.



Here you can see the fiddle yard side of the layout, with to the rear, some of the roads temporarily marked out by the lengths of flexi-track. In the foreground is the template actually for a part of the Kentside station formation, with the ply sleepers glued down and ready to start laying rails.



Here we see the lifting section. Note copper-clad track construction in the off-stage areas.



And the lifting section from below, with the simple spring contacts to power the adjacent section, considered an essential safety feature! Basically you can't run off the end as that bit's only powered when the deck is down.



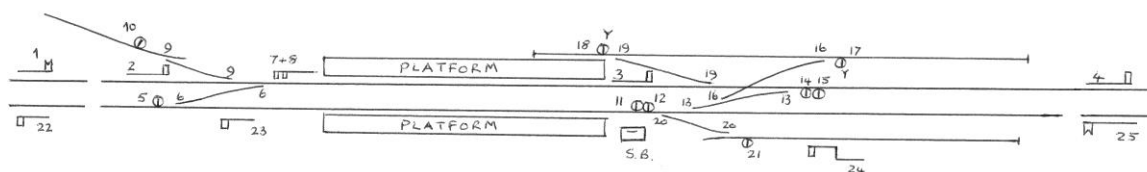
A completed track formation for Kentside station, ready to be installed (I'll paint this later as given the complexity, some tweaking may be required!).



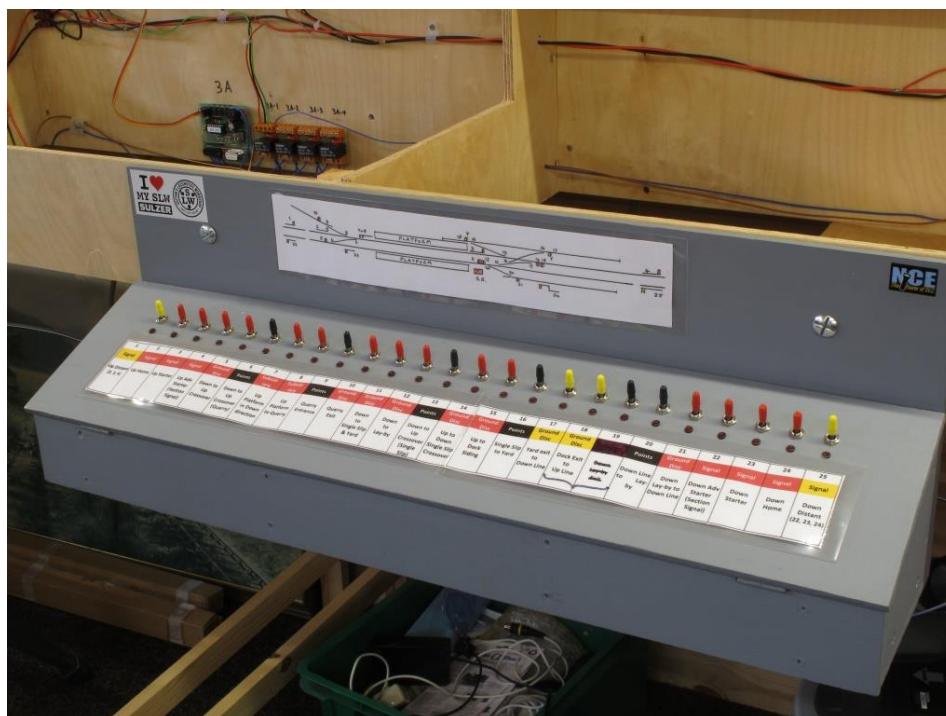
Photo above. The track for Kentside station/goods yard, all now complete and operational. Even with the 29 foot shed, I had to continue the headshunt onto the lifting section to squeeze it all in! I did sacrifice a bit of length to make room for the lifting section, but this was considered an essential provision....

Of course to wire it all up and get the points working, I first needed to build a switch panel and for that I had to design the signalling. This I did with the help of Mike Norris and Chris Littleworth (though any errors in my interpretation of their ideas are entirely my own!).

KENTSIDE STATION
25 LEVER FRAME (NO SPARES)



From this I could construct the switch panel. As you'll see from the photo below this at present takes the form of a set of miniature toggle switches laid out like a lever frame. Eventually this will be replaced with a proper lever frame of the Scalefour Society pattern as designed by Howard Bolton, but for now the switches will do the job nicely. At present there's no interlocking, but eventually there will be an 'interlocker board' that sits in between the panel and the layout to perform this function. But at least for now this means I can change the points and work the layout! Oh and I should mention at this point that the scenic sections of the layout will all be operated using the absolute block principle and be fully under the control of miniature block instruments etc. with the roles of signaller and drivers being segregated as in the real thing. Should be great fun!

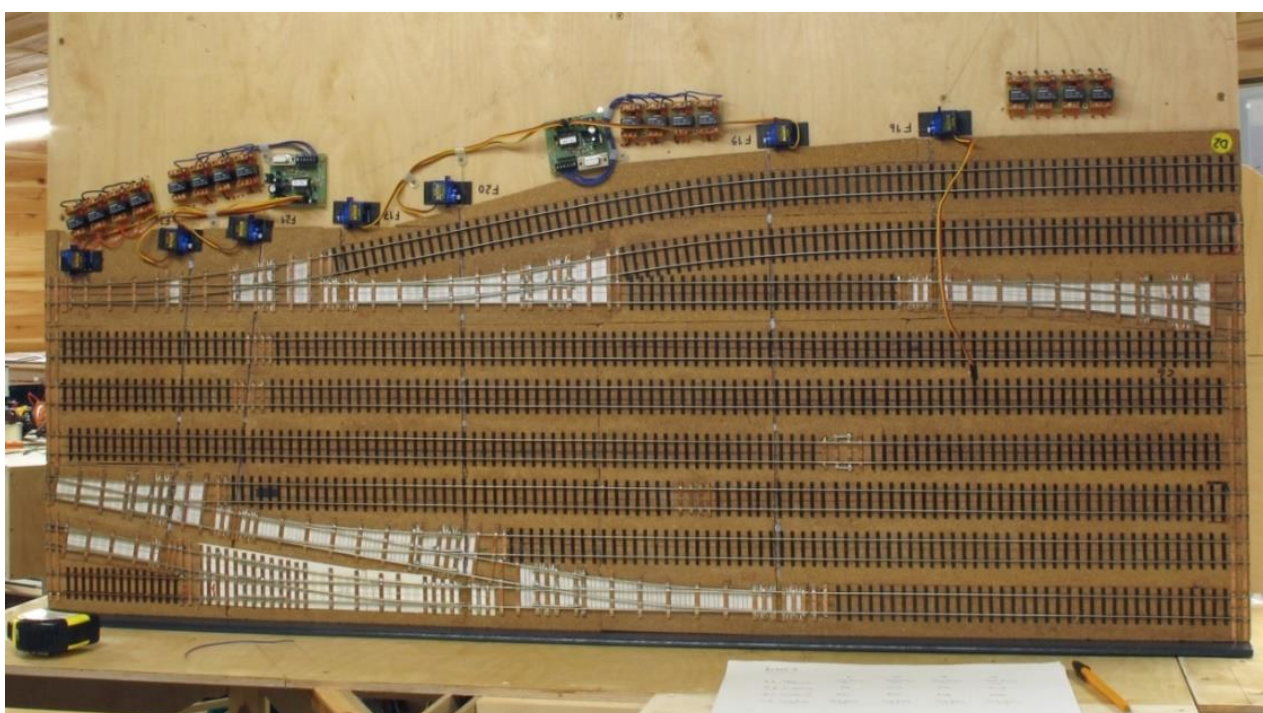


The Kentside Station switch panel (above). The LEDs below each ‘lever’ don’t work at present, but the interlocker board will light these up to show ‘illegal’ i.e. interlocked pulls (and sound an audible warning!). The same functionality will be present on the proper lever frame too.



Work on fiddle yard trackwork in progress. See explanation next page.

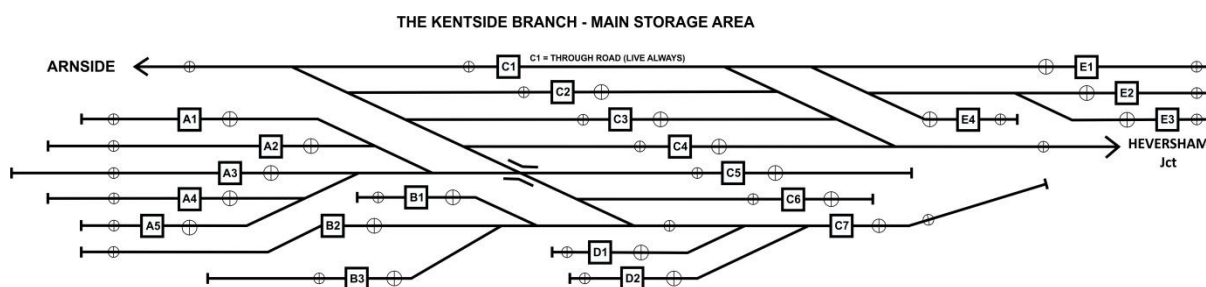
Thus, Kentside station trackwork was now all sorted - that is with the exception of the quarry area, which not being operationally essential, will form the last phase of track building. The intention is to get the whole layout fully operational and signalled before any scenic development takes place - the objective being able to have operating sessions at the earliest possible opportunity! So, now we logically turn to the fiddle yard (above). I have to admit I had no precise plan in mind, just a broad idea of what, operationally, would be required. What I've ended up with is a through line around the back, which with the main circuit, will be switchable to analogue to allow running in of locos etc. Then I have three loop lines leading off this, but the remaining storage as dead end sidings, which will suit the planned end-end pattern of operations. In the photo above, the two pieces of loose flexi-track mark out the approximate route of the 'main line' to Kendal, while the bare Templot plans on the left is the formation for Natland Junction and its associated Marthwaite Branch storage sidings, placed in its approximate position on the baseboards. The bare area in the foreground will be the location of the latter.



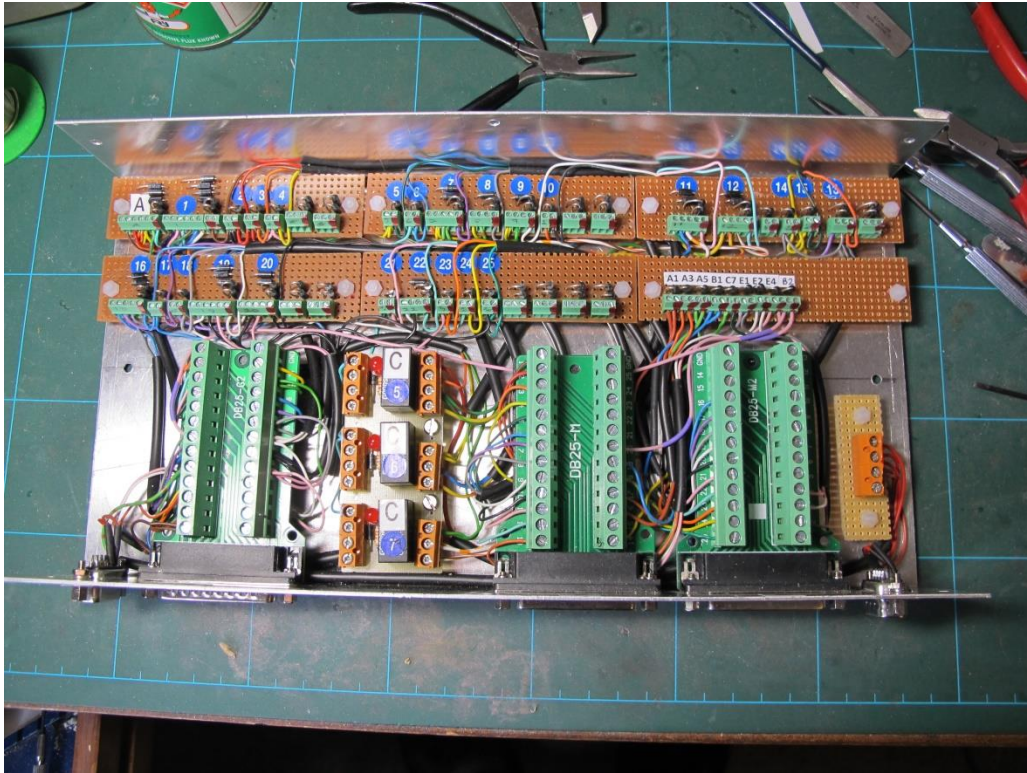
Here, I've now laid all of the main fiddle yard trackwork and one of the boards has been placed on its side with wiring in progress. The points are worked by servos via the MERG Servo 4 units – for ease of access these have all been arranged on the baseboard surface and operate the points via wire-in-tube passing through the cork underlay. You can also see the relay boards which are a design by Richard Challis – these activate the servos and also change the crossing polarity. It's also been designed such that only those tracks actually selected receive DCC power and this switching is also done via the relays. Wiring up the fiddle yard took me the better part of three months!



Photo above. The fiddle yard now all put back together, at last! You can see in the centre, the ‘main panel’ that controls all of the ‘internal’ pointwork. The two smaller panels are, on the left, for the Arnside East Junction exit from the fiddle yard. In between this and the main panel you can see the diode matrix board that controls route selection of the internal sidings (which normally fits underneath the layout). The right hand panel controls both Heversham and Natland Junctions.



Above can be seen the track layout of the main storage area – basically what the panel itself looks like. Using the diode matrix, each route has its own switch (indicated by the larger circles), which when activated, selects all of the points to provide that route. LEDs (smaller circles) provide a visual indication of what route is selected. Roads C5 and C7 aren't for actual storage and form departure/arrival roads for some of the groups of sidings. Richard Challis kindly designed and built the diode matrix board for me (see photo next page).



Close-up of the diode matrix board. The 25-way connection on the bottom left is the input from the control panel, whilst the two connectors on the right are the feeds to the relevant fiddle yard boards. The three relays in between are to do with selecting routes via the double slip, while the diode matrices themselves are at the top.

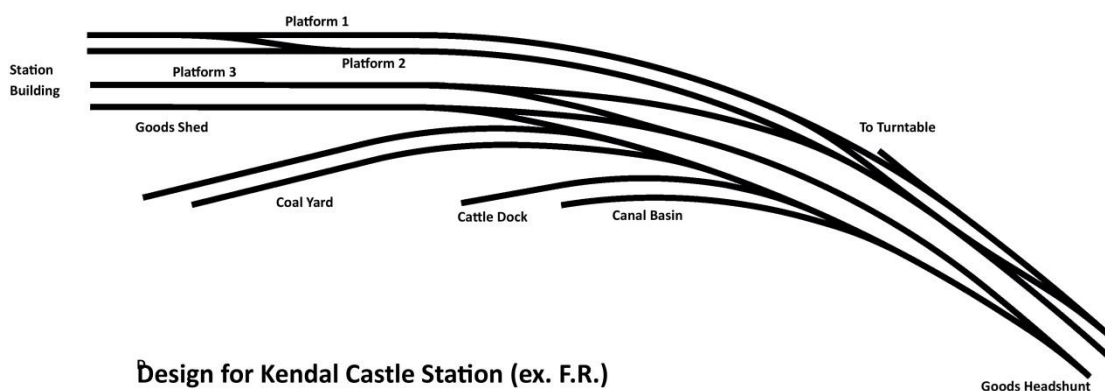


Photo above – a view along the now completed and operational fiddle yard. The two points nearest the camera form the ‘virtual’ Arnside East Junction – i.e. marking the commencement of the absolute block section from here in the down direction to Kentside.



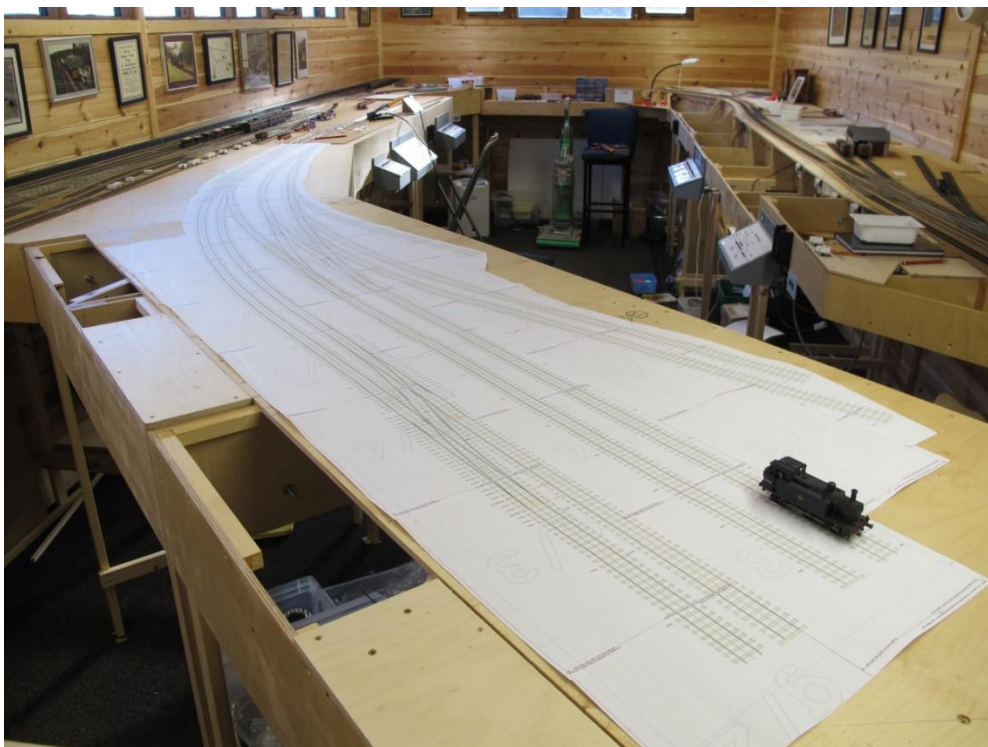
On with Natland Junction. Over the Christmas shut down I was able to press on and build the Natland Junction formation, which you can see here now complete and glued down onto the cork. Again, all servos are on the baseboard surface and as far as possible, the relays too.

And finally to Kendal.....



Design for Kendal Castle Station (ex. F.R.)

The final task I was able to get done at the New Year (2020/21) was to design the track plan for Kendal Castle on Templot, which amazingly was achieved in a single afternoon! For those familiar with Lakeside you'll hopefully agree I've managed to get a layout that reflects that station quite well. Of course the configuration is a little different due to it being double instead of single track, but access to and from the three main platforms is maintained as in the real location. The goods yard is quite different to fit the available space, but the goods shed is adjacent to the train shed as at Lakeside. The canal basin represents the termination of the Lancaster Canal. Finally the turntable is at the opposite side of the station, also due to space considerations, but on the whole, I feel it will reflect Lakeside pretty nicely.



It was quite a big job joining up all the sheets to make the full Templot diagram, but you can hopefully get a good idea from this how it will fit into the site. I just now need to crack on and build it! Essentially it's a sizeable layout in its own right.



Lakeside Station Buildings – photo by the late Peter Robinson, courtesy Cumbrian Railways Association. I hope you will agree it's a most attractive prototype for the basis of Kendal Castle and should make a really interesting model.

Well there you have it, progress thus far on my layout of a lifetime project (as at January 2021). I really hope you've found this of interest. I'm around two and a half years into the project and I think the progress in that time has been encouraging. Hopefully Kendal Castle will be complete and the layout fully operational inside the next twelve months – exciting stuff!

There are regular updates about The Kentside Branch on Kier Hardy's excellent website, plus lots of other brilliant layouts and projects to inspire. Go to www.emgauge70s.co.uk and view the Updates page.

In addition, I'm also doing a series of articles on the developing layout for Model Railway Journal, so I have plenty to keep me occupied!



A final view of the original Kentside (photo by Ian Manderson). On the Kentside Branch, the view to Whitbarrow Scar (seen here) will be a backscene feature behind the viaduct. The sands of the Kent Estuary, again originally only a backscene feature, will be modelled in full 3D as the frontage to the re-created Kentside station, which should be an enjoyable challenge (though some way off as yet). The ex-LMS 2F seen here was constructed from the Alan Gibson kit. It was a Lakeside Branch regular and on the new layout will be seen on the local pick up goods workings. It has compensated wheelsets on both loco and tender and is powered by a High Level/Mashima motor/gearbox combination with 'live to one axle' current collection between loco and tender.