Eastwood Town

OK, back to the present. Each to their own, but my passion is full length trains and stations with reasonable facilities and I am now lucky enough to have sufficient space to create something to meet that need. In the early days I experimented with Tillig track and whilst it was fine, the restrictions that RTR gave me meant I was unable to create something with flowing curves. For years I have been jealous of those who could make their own track, but felt I would never be able to do it. It was encouragement from this forum that got me over that hurdle a couple of years ago and I was really surprised that I was able to create something that worked. It was though a whole new world opened for me.

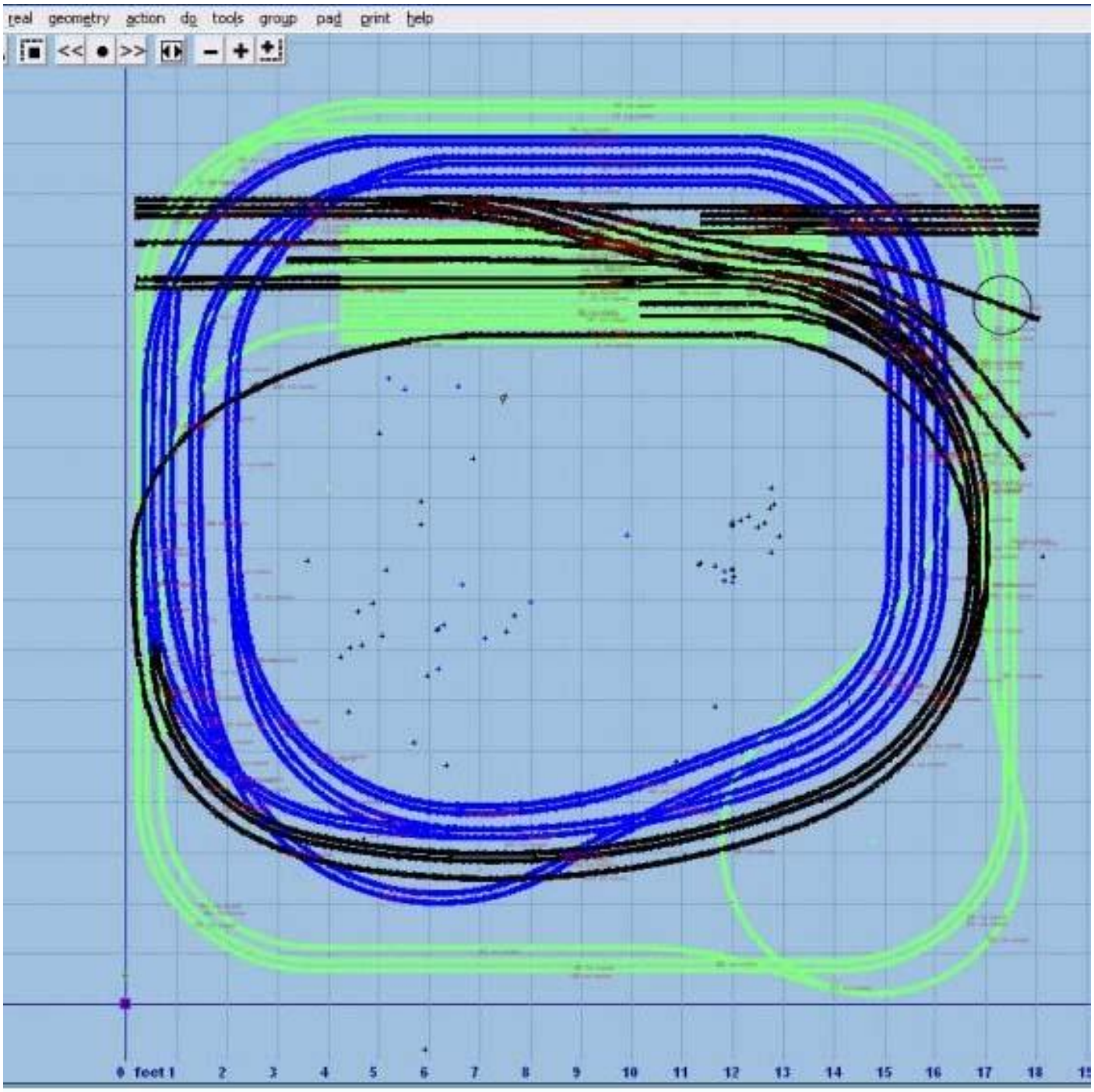
Once that happened, I had also read about Templot and decided that would be the way to go for me in terms of layout design. Sadly it was a mystery to me and despite several attempts to get started I could not get my head round it, until one day with some help from Martin Wynne, it all clicked into place and I have to say it is the best piece of layout planning software I have ever used and invaluable to anyone who is building their own track.

The current layout is my third attempt at building this layout. Two earlier designs ended up in the skip as a combination of issues meant insurmountable problems were encountered. The biggest problem was failure to appreciate gradients and the brief to run steam locos with 7/8 coach trains. The first layout had a 1:50 climb and trains just ground to a halt, with the combination of loco adhesion, weight of the train, curves on the climb and too fierce a gradient. Everything has now been re-planned with nothing less than a 1:100 gradient.

The layout starts from a 16 track traverser which has been made from ply and heavy duty runners. It does work, although I will be making some changes to the track alignment. There then follows a double circuit climb of about 150' which allows an 18" clearance for access to the traverser and stock storage. The hidden lines have all been constructed on very narrow boards so that access to all hidden areas can be easily undertaken. The layout is dcc and is split into three power districts. Each district is protected by a circuit breaker first and then each individual board has it's own isolation switch for fault finding.

Once the lines emerge, they continue around a folded figure of eight which will allow continuous running, should you just want to sit back and watch trains. The final level is a large terminus with engine facilities and a goods relief road which will serve

industrial units. I was fortunate enough to purchase the buildings from Great Northern's Peterborough layout. These were built by Alan Downes and are really superb. This will be an urban setting and all scenery will be tunnels, bridges, retaining walls and low relief industrial buildings. It will be set in the transition period which will allow me to run both steam or diesel, although I do adopt a run whatever I like attitude and odd locos will certainly make an appearance from time to time.



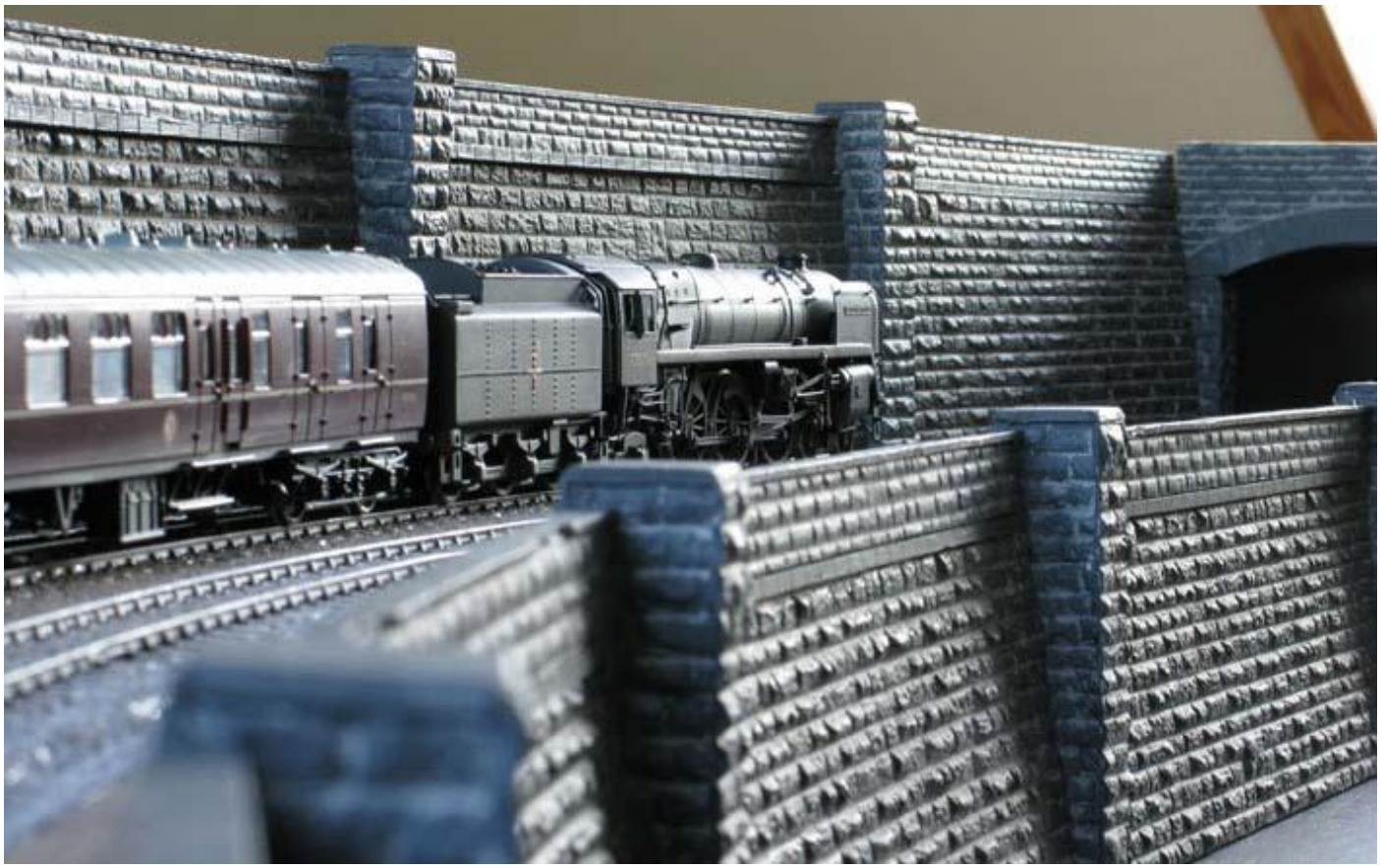
Track Plan

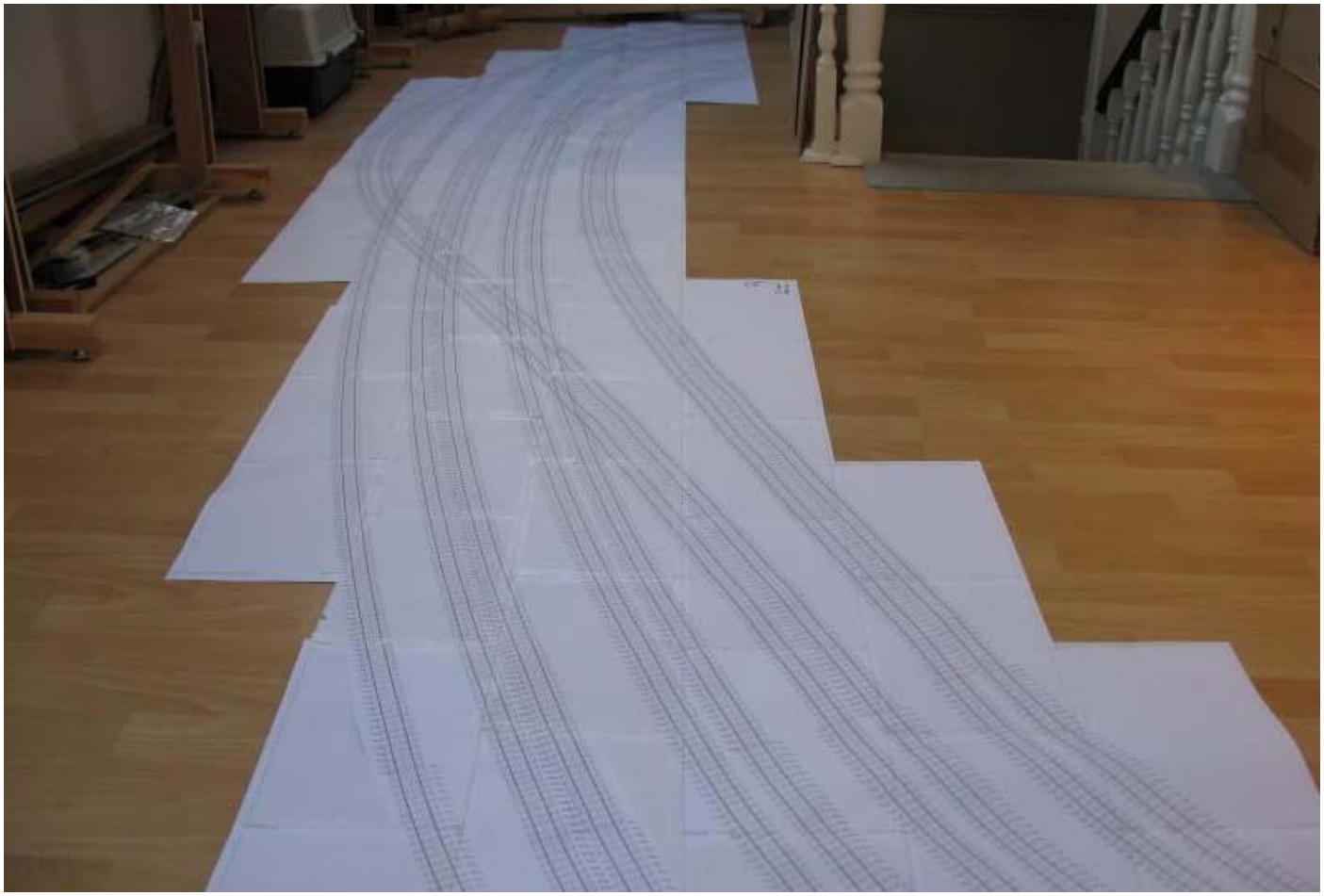
The layout is 4mm, 00 gauge.

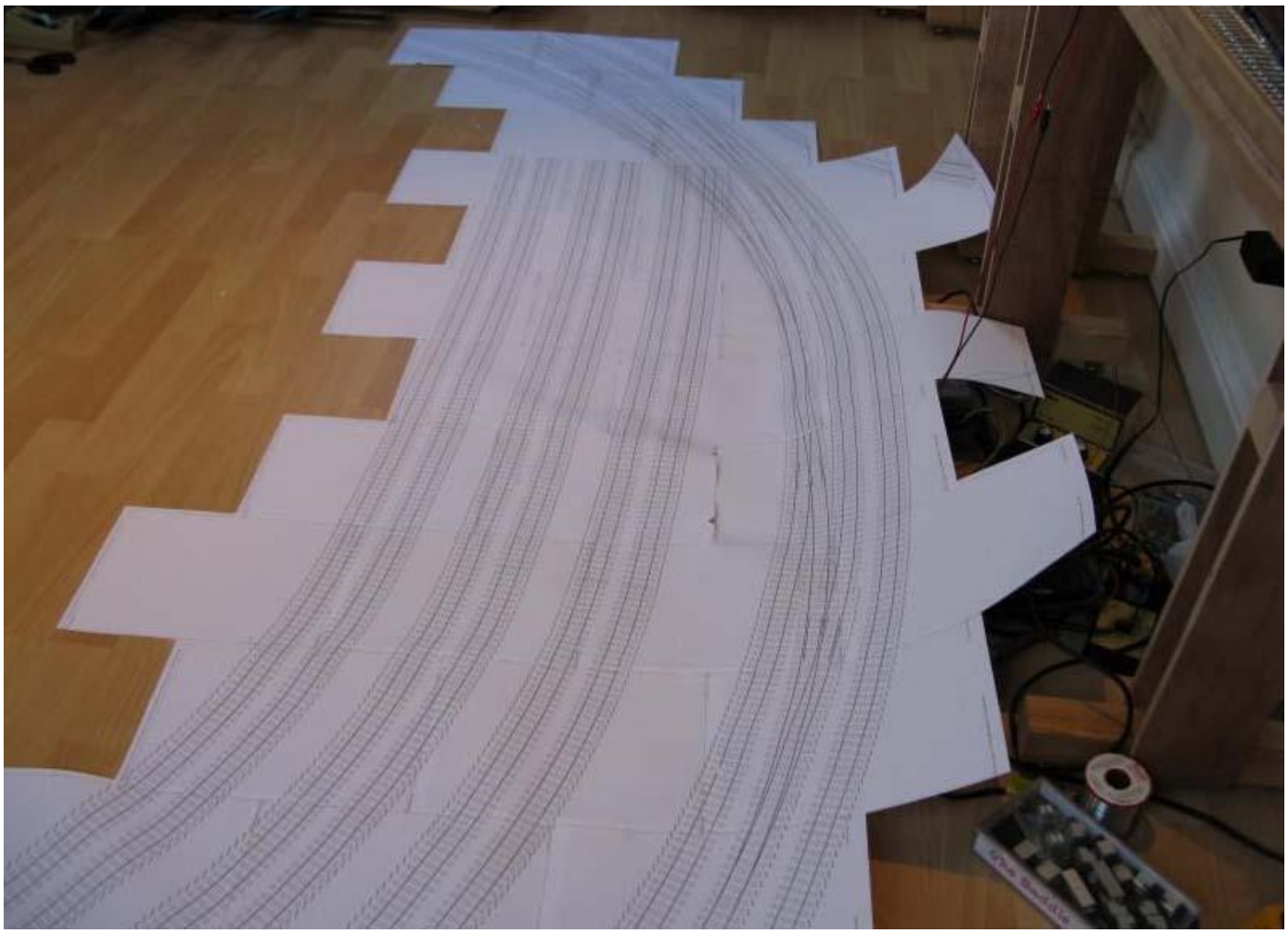
The lower level is all code 83 Tillig plain track from the previous layout. All the visible track is code 75 rail, SMP plain track and hand built PCB pointwork using C & L components.

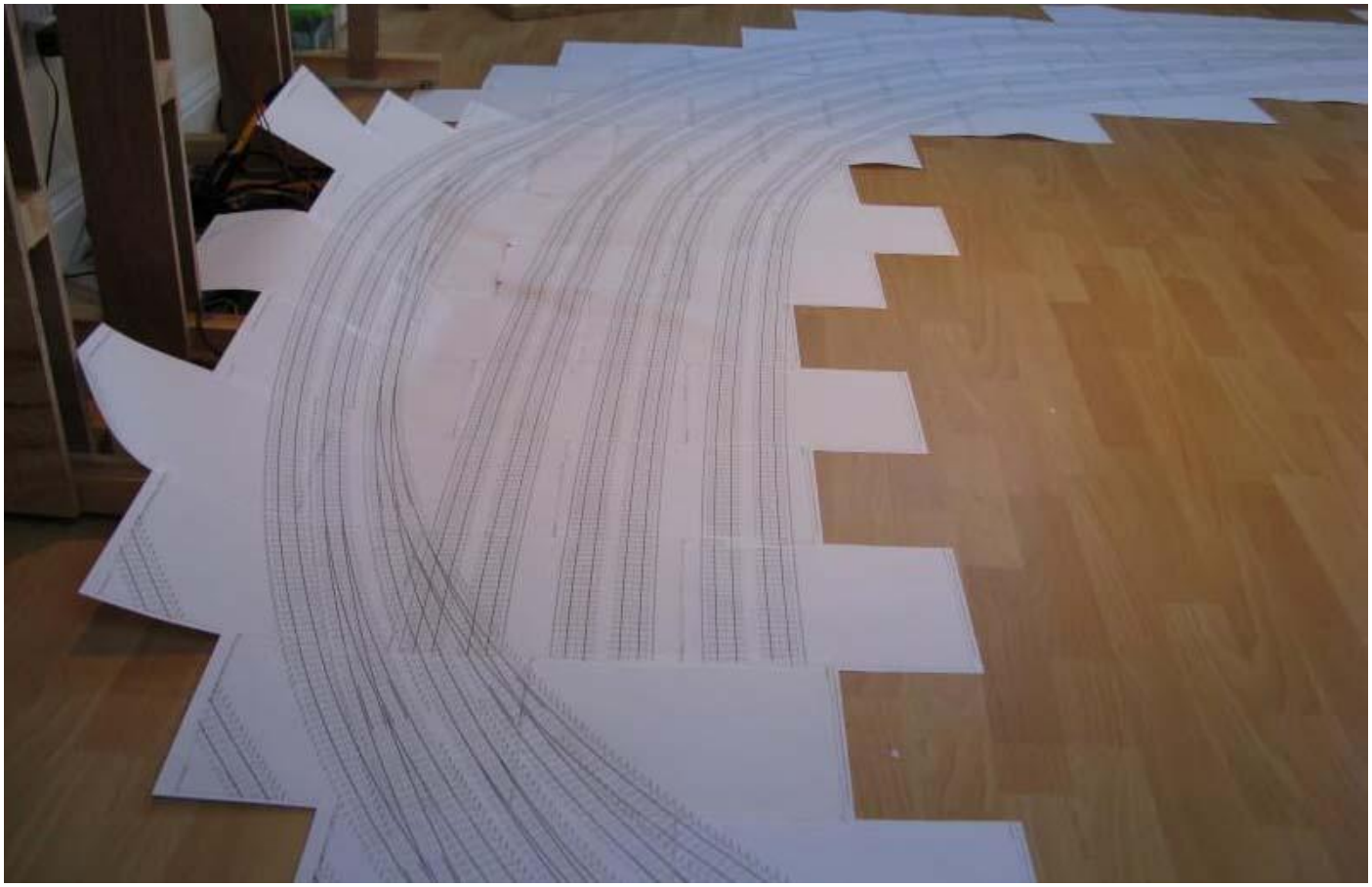
The first board has been made as that had to sit over the stairwell, so this has track laid, wired and ballasted and the first pass scenic work is in place.

There is still much to do but the bulk of the work on this first board has been completed. The lower levels are virtually complete and work is now starting on the folded eight. I have printed off a full size plan of about 30% of the layout and you can see how this will take shape.



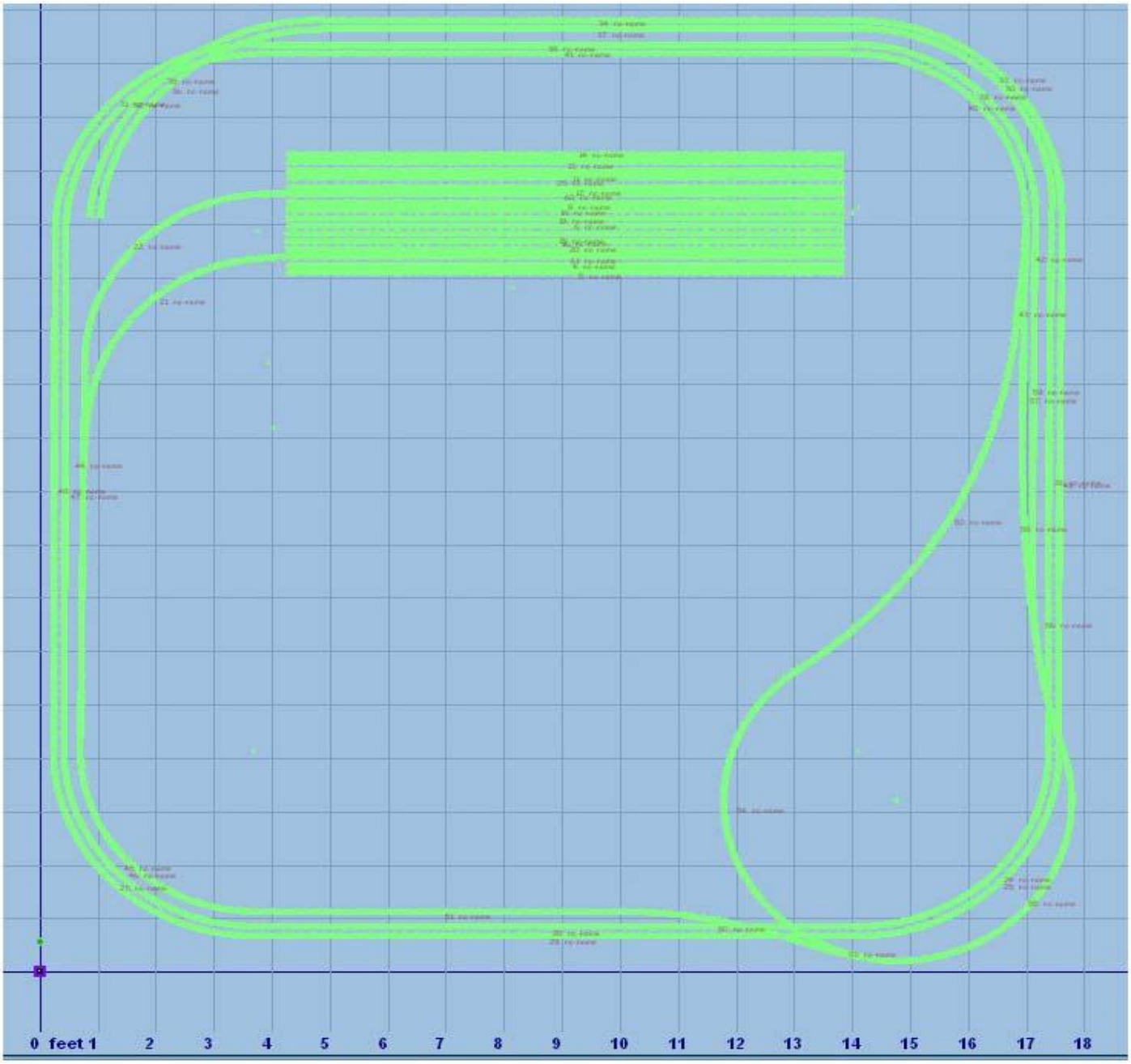




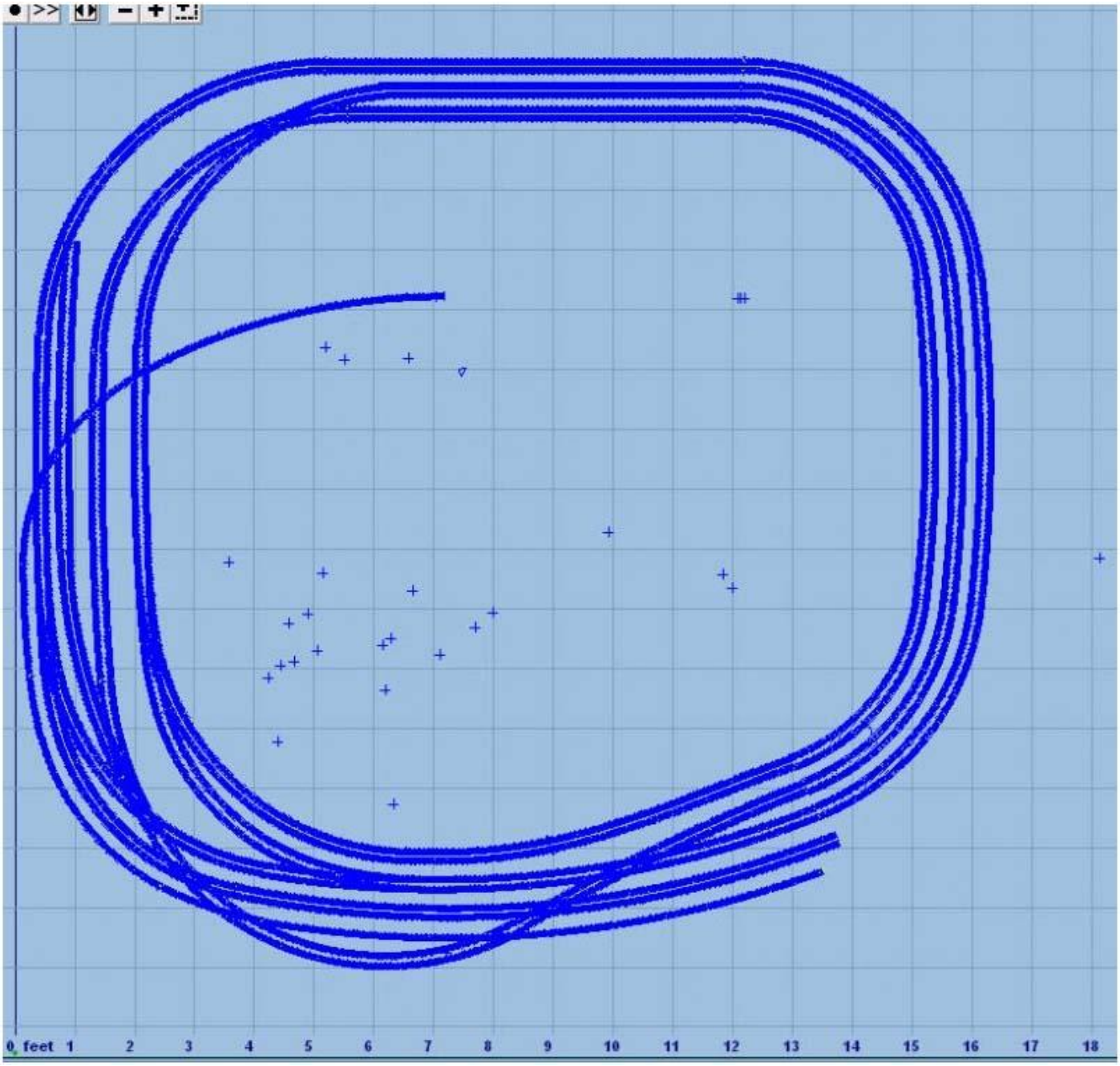


This project is not a five minute job and I suspect it will take 18 months or so to get up to the terminus level. I work on my own and even though I have retired it's amazing where the time goes. I'll happily post updates if people are interested..

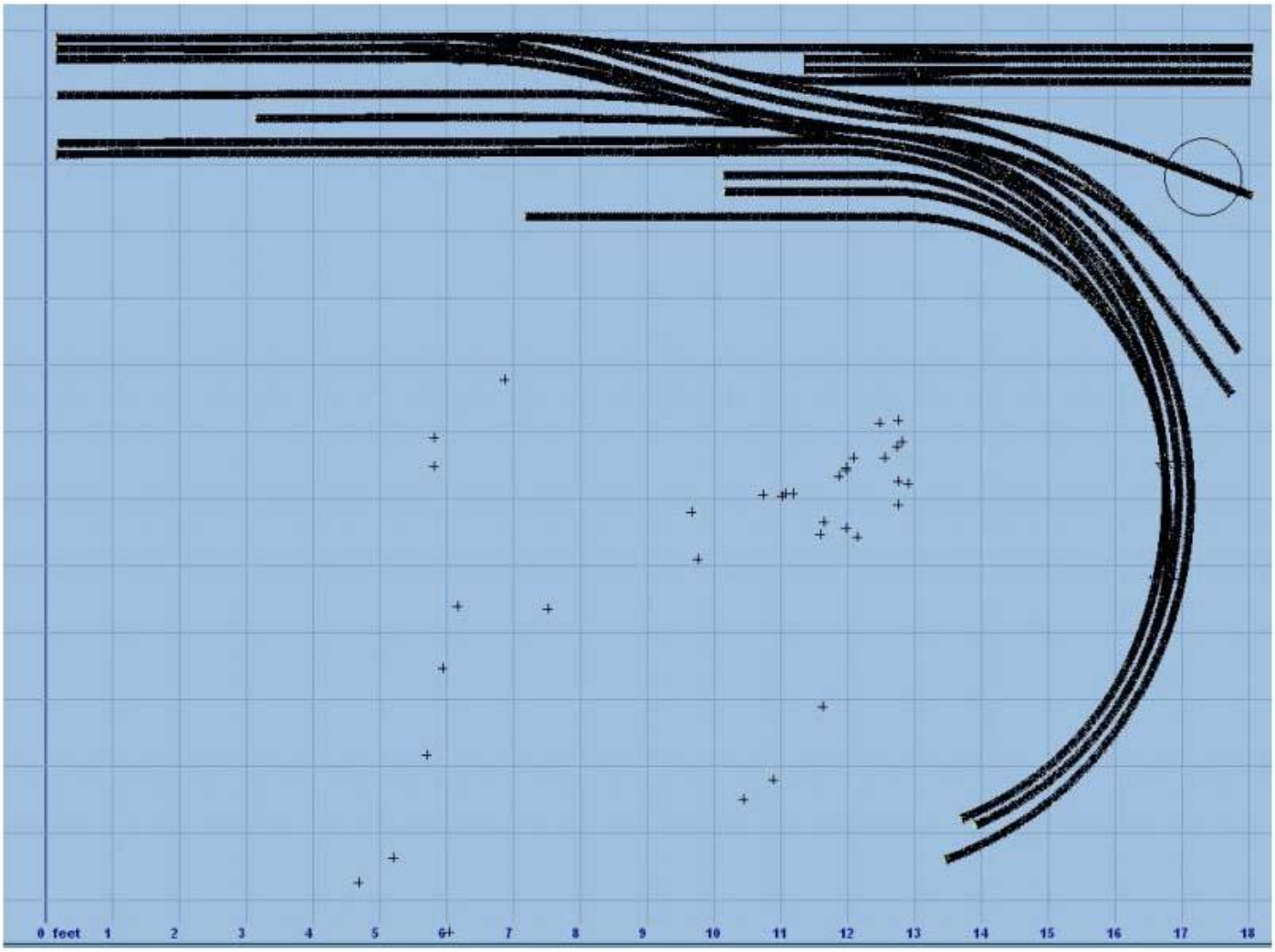
Without Templot software I'm limited to screen shots, so I've separated the three levels to see if that helps....



Lower Level – Fiddle Yard and return Loop

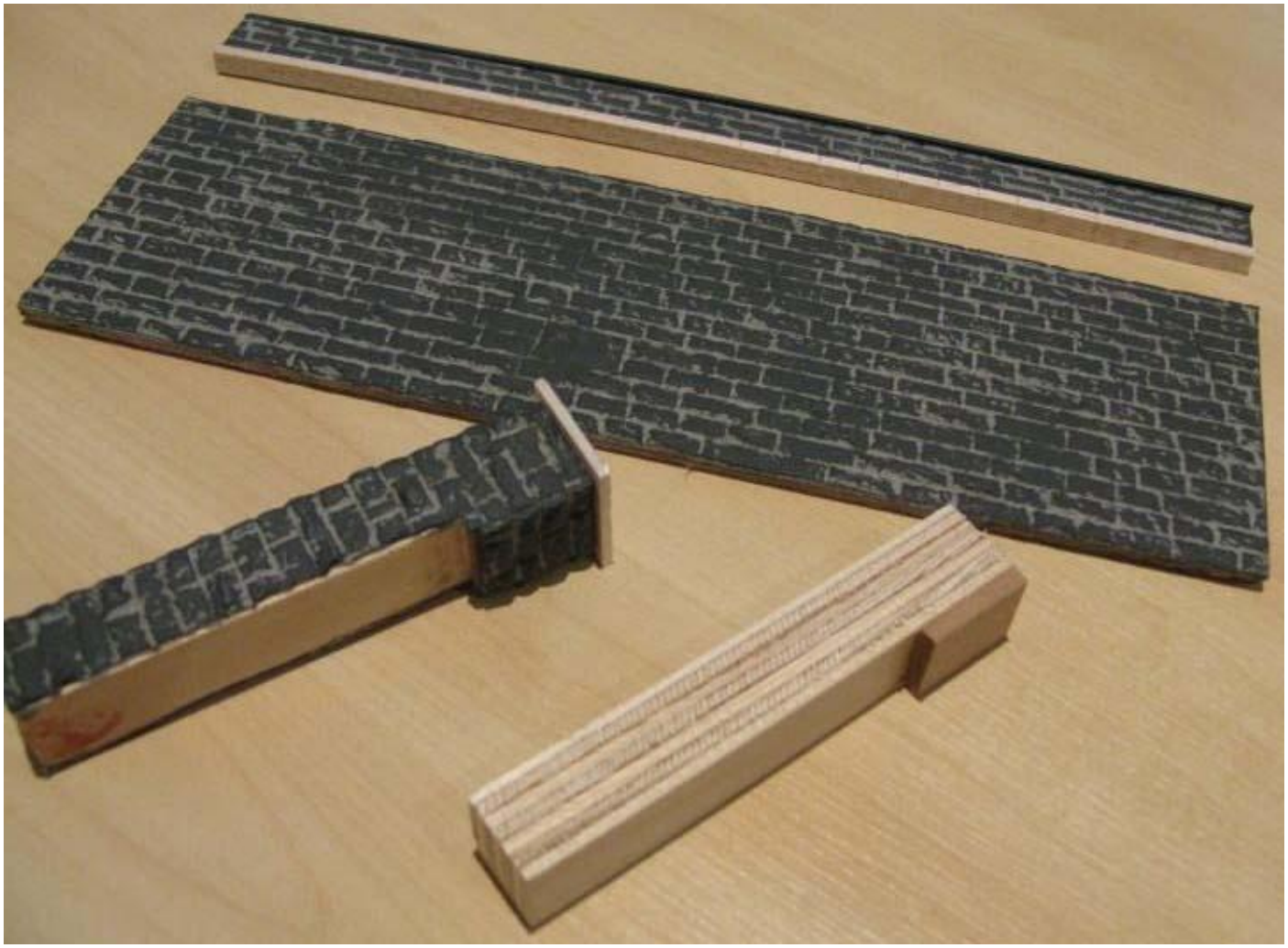


Intermediate Level - Junctions



Top Level – Station and MPD

The walls and pillars are fairly straightforward to make. Whilst I can do woodwork, track and electrics, I have never done any scenic work at all, so this was a first attempt. I'm pleased with the overall result and believe me, if I can do it, then most should be able to get an acceptable result without too much effort.



The pillar is a piece of 18mm ply with a strip of 6mm mdf added to form the step as per the pic. The card is Slaters embossed card #415 7MM Dressed Stone. After a few tries, I found the best result was doing the face that is going to be seen, last, so would stick the card on both sides flush with the front face. Once set, cut a piece of Plasticard wider than the pillar for the front face, so it that it overlaps the sides. You will need to make sure the courses line up, but that's pretty straightforward. Stick it in place and once set, turn the pillar over and trim the excess from the front face with a scalpel. I use No Nails as an adhesive. Looking from the sides you will see there are gaps from the embossed card, which I fill with No Nails using the good old fashioned finger. Fairly simple painting covers the filler and a multitude of sins...

The pillars themselves are 18mm ply with a strip of 4mm mdf glued on. I start with a strip 500-600mm long and just slice it into 18mm wide pillars. The rest is just made up from strip balsa. The string course is roughly the same width as the wall thickness and just scribed by applying pressure with a scalpel blade every 10mm. The coping stones are again strip balsa about 3mm thick and scribed by the same method. The top stone on the pillar is just sheet balsa glued on the top of the pillar and then trimmed to shape. These were first attempts so so could be improved. I just cut a slight bevel edge to them and they're OK but could be better...

I used No more Nails or the DIY store own brand stuff. Avoid Evo stick as it melts the plastic. It has been suggested to use double sided tape, so I may give that a try later...

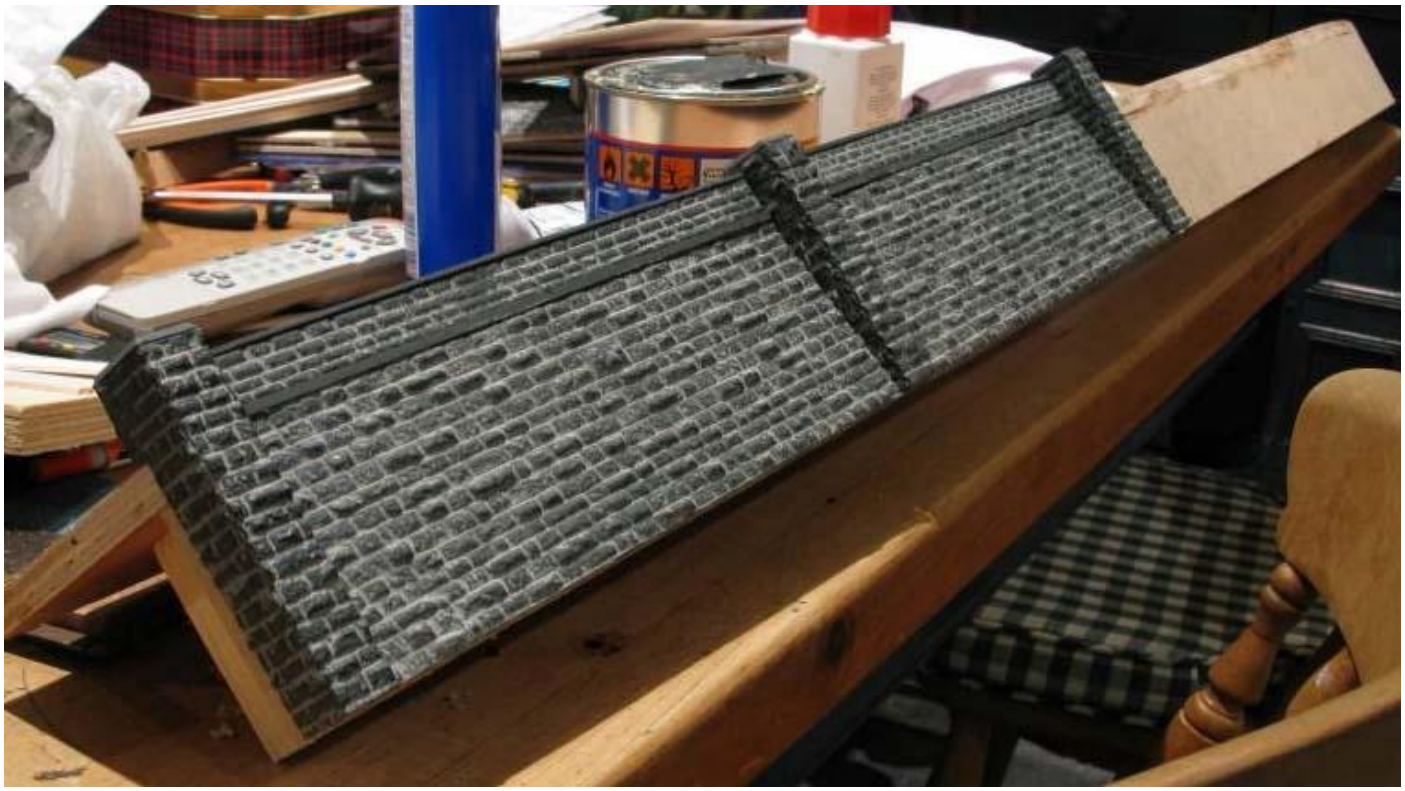
Retaining walls.

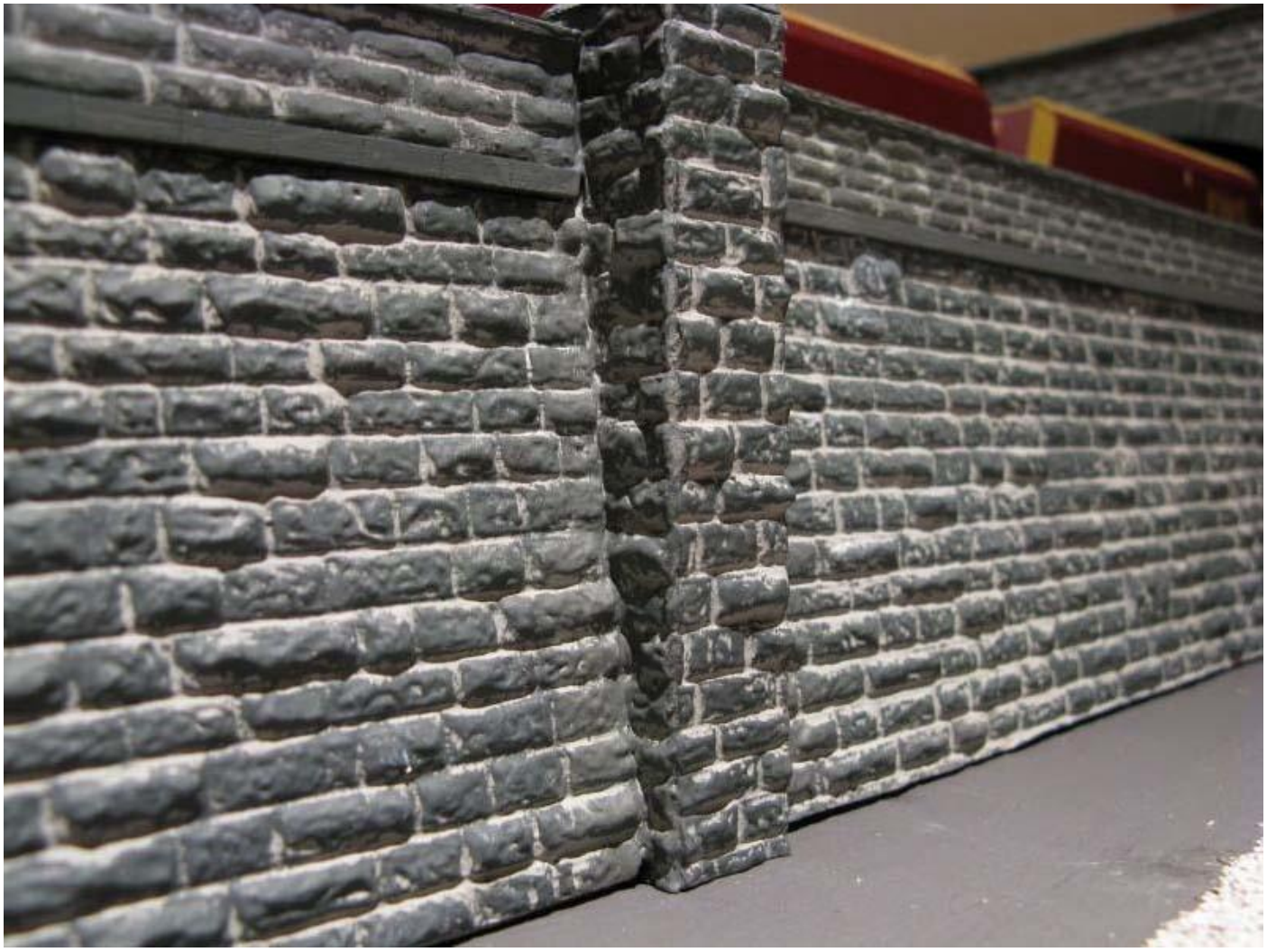
I originally used Humbrol colours for my walls. I found a light grey and dark grey combination that I was happy with and took a sample to my local paint shop. They mixed up some matt emulsion in those colours. Much, much cheaper than using those little tinlets and absolutely fine for use.

First thing was to paint the whole sheet in the light grey. Let it dry and then you are ready for the dark grey. You will need a stiff brush about 1/2" wide and I used an old artist brush which reminded me of brushes we used to have in the Art class at school. The actual bristles are about 1/2" long, no more.

My method is to dip the brush in the dark grey and then paint the bulk of the paint onto a piece of card or scrap wood. Brush off most of the paint and then using the brush at a 45 degree angle, just lightly brush across the wall. This will leave the dark grey on the raised surface of the stone without covering the mortar joins which will be left in light grey. It doesn't matter if you go over the raised stones three or four times. Just use a small amount of paint and quite light brush strokes. After a while you will build up the dark grey and things should look fine. If you start at the bottom of the wall, you will find the colour naturally fades out towards the top. This is fine with the dirtiest part of the wall being at the bottom. When I get round to weathering the basic finish, I will follow the same plan and brush from the bottom up.

The two Dulux colours I used are S4502Y for the light grey and S7500N for the dark grey which are exact matches for the Humbrol colours. Any DIY store or paint supplier with the Dulux system should recognise those numbers. I got a 250ml tin of each and that will last some time.



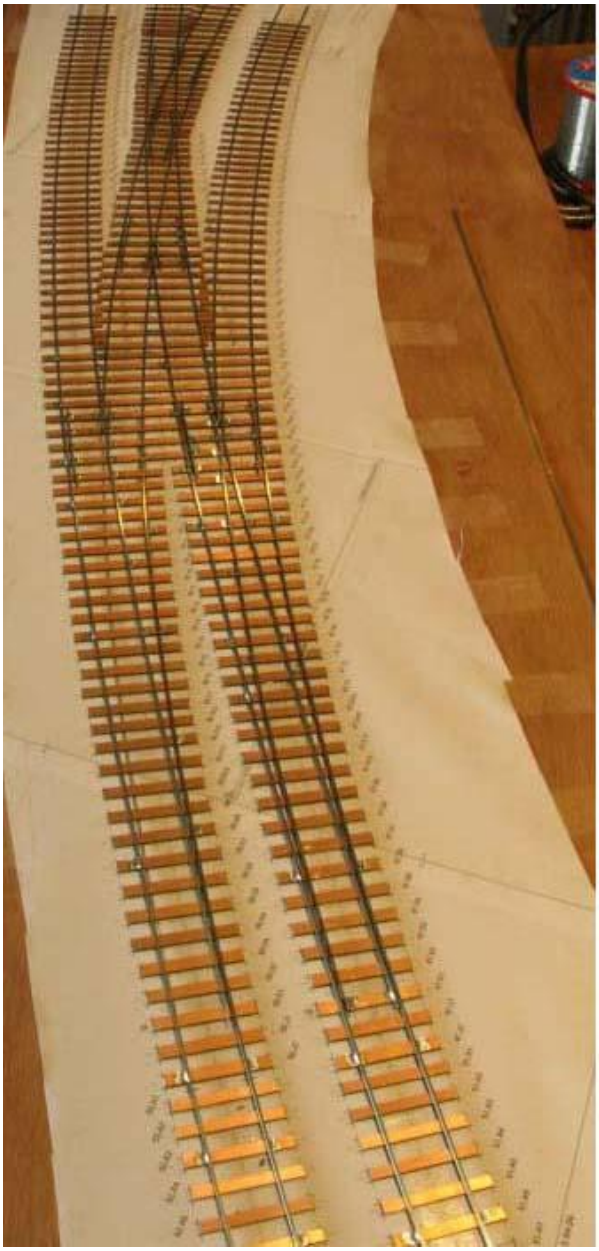


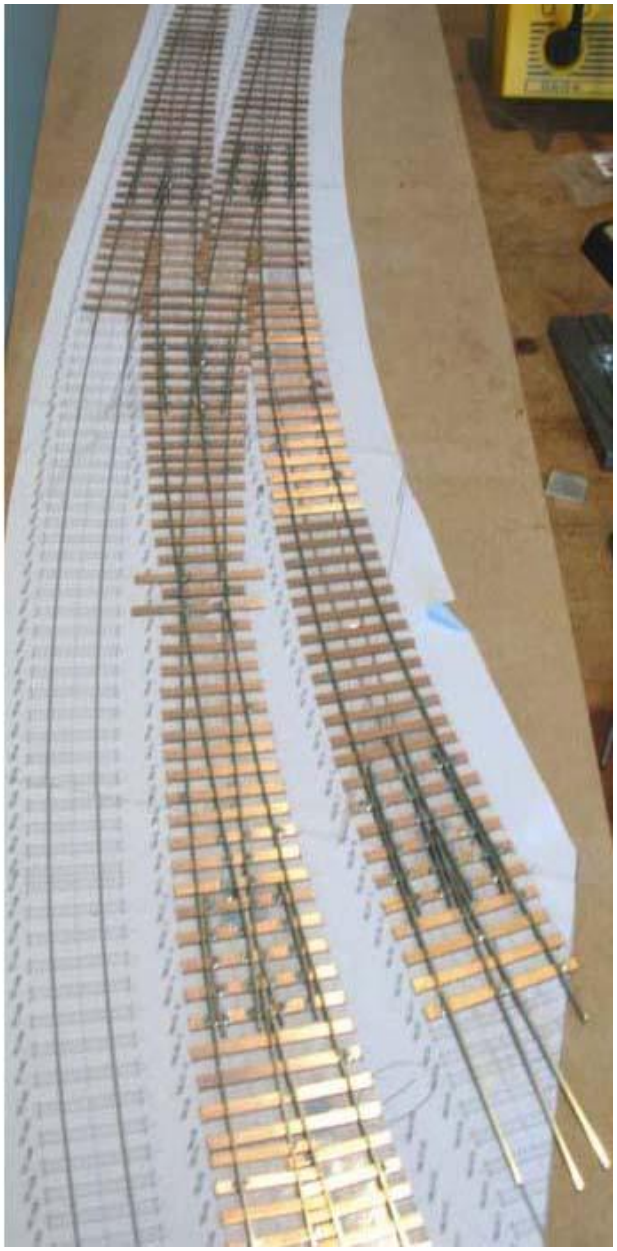
The hidden spiral and traverser is Tillig which I rescued from an earlier layout attempt. All the visible plain track is SMP. The pointwork is all hand built from Templot templates and C & L components, Code 75 bullhead rail and pcb sleeper construction. Ballast is Woodlands scenic.

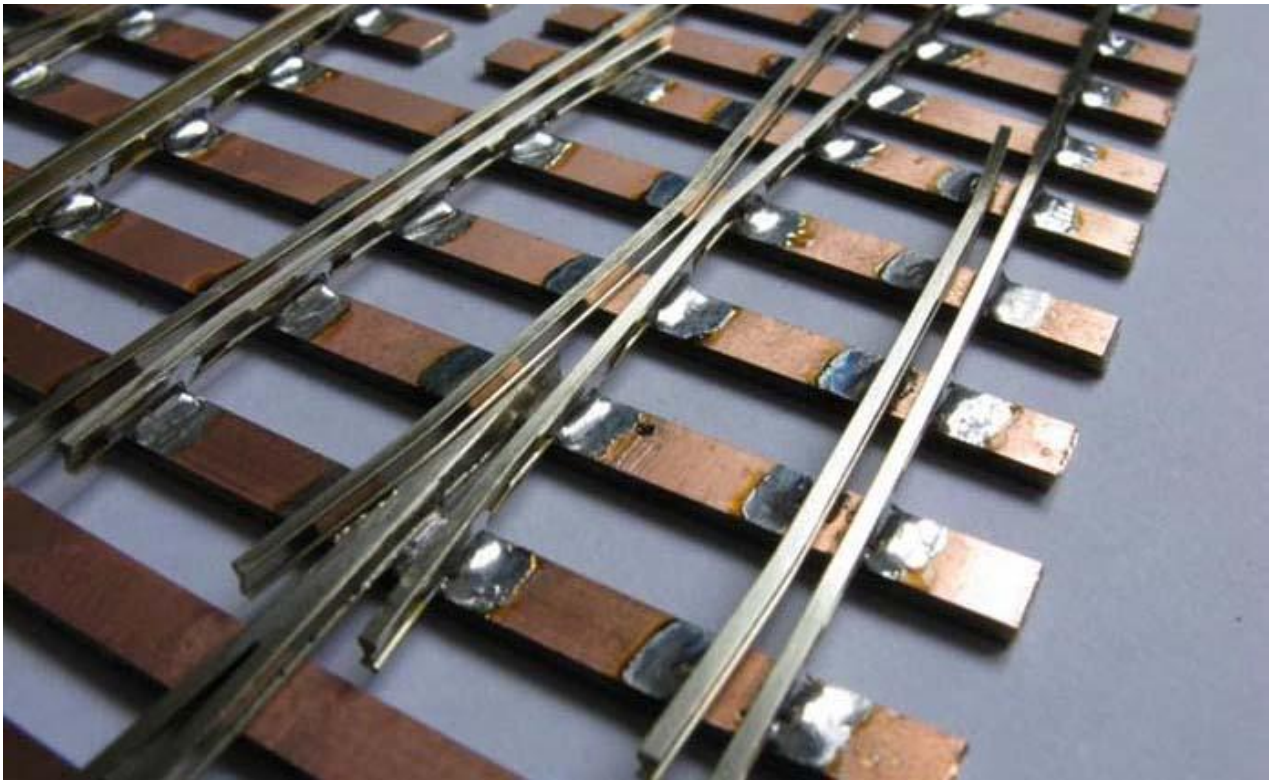
Ballasting.

The ballast I have used is Woodland Scenics B1394 Medium Grey Blend. It has been used straight from the jar. I use the Capn Kernow method of ballasting, which is to apply neat PVA between the sleepers with a tiny paintbrush. Yes it's tedious, but I now find I can ballast a few feet in an hour and it gives me by far the best result with no rework required at all. It may not suit everyone, but certainly gives me what I require.

I can't access the old forum at the moment, but if you search on Eastwood Town or ballasting you should find some more info. In terms of painting the track, I spray red oxide primer over all the track. I'm using a car spray from Simonize. This dries in seconds and I then wipe the rail surface clean with a rag. I paint all the track in a dark brown, which looks fine to me from normal viewing distance. I started using Humbrol "Chocolate" but then Dulux came to the rescue again and I now use matt vinyl emulsion in the identical colour. I've checked the tin for a code and all I could find was 1108H473388. This is a different type of code number to the others, so don't take it as gospel that it is the correct shade.



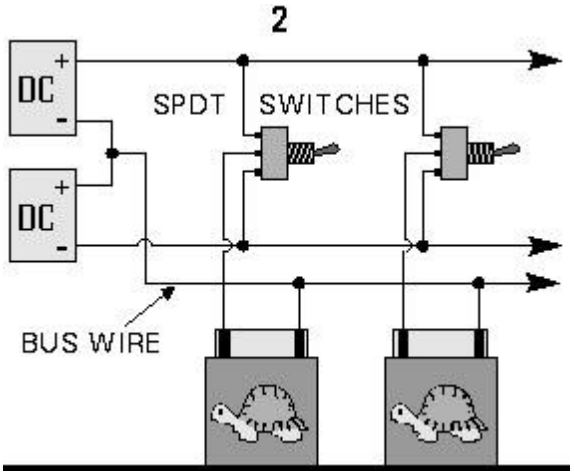


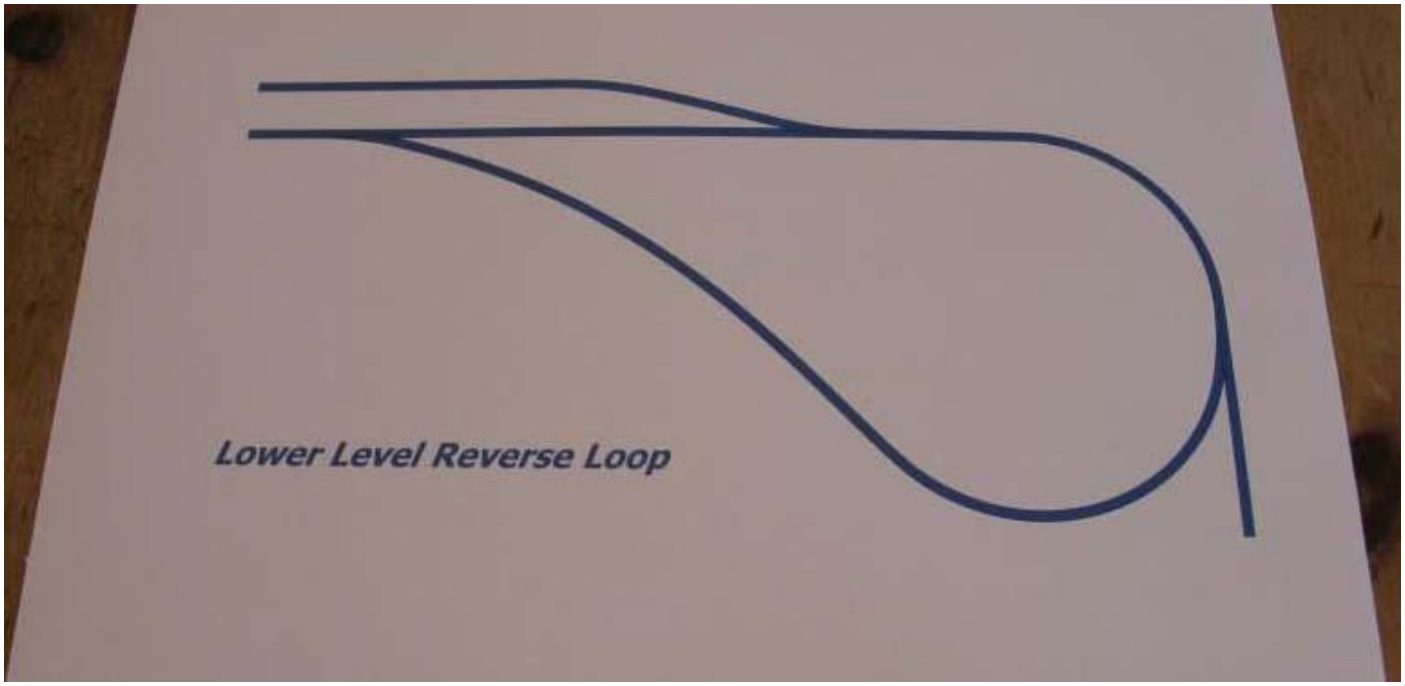


I have actually been working on the layout over the past few weeks on a succession of projects. I was concerned about the size of the power bus as the length of run over each level was approaching the 30' recommended maximum in each direction. I also found that relying on fish plates for electrical continuity was really not a good thing, particularly in areas which are hidden from view and not easily accessed. The decision was made and each section of board was removed one at a time and droppers added to every piece of track. I also took the opportunity to increase the bus size from 1.5mm to 4mm and wired in the reverse loop module and the first of three circuit breakers.

Having experienced a few shorts in the past, I know that tracing a short can be very time consuming, particularly on such a large layout. Each level now has its own breaker and the length of track is split into 3m sections, each of which has its own isolating switch. Locating a short is now a simple process, with the circuit breaker kicking in first and then by switching out/in each section, the locality of the short can now be limited to a specific 3m section.

I have never built a control panel before, so took the opportunity to build a small panel for the lower level return loop, which has a a pair of power supplies giving +12v/0v/-12v. The 0v rail goes to one side of the Tortoise motor and the +12v and -12v to a SPDT switch, with the output going to the other side of the Tortoise. LED's are then fed in parallel across the switch to give route indication. This means just one wire per point motor going between the control panel and the layout.



The panel was made up from some odd bits of ply and mdf that were left over from earlier layouts. I printed the plan out using WinRail and then laminated this with some clear plastic sheet. Holes were drilled for the switches and LED's and the whole thing wired up. Had a few minor mishaps, but they were soon corrected and everything now works. The panel now sits on a small shelving unit with the NCE Pro Cab and a short length of programming track.

This has been a worthwhile exercise and I will follow a similar mode of construction for the main terminus panel. That will probably be 600-900mm long with over 30 switches and I guess, 100+ LEDs for route indication.....Happy days