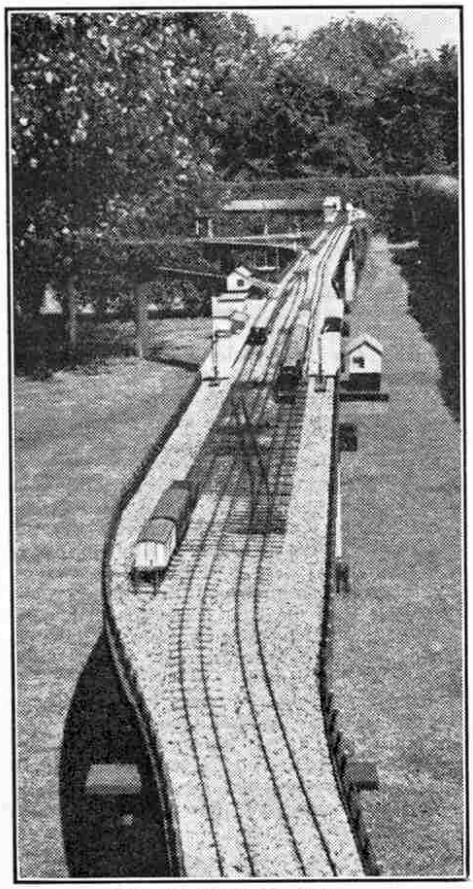
A Railway in a Garden

By W. J. Bassett-Lowke, M.I.Loco.E.



"Lone Pine" through station.

MODEL railwaymen have different ideas and motives in the development of their hobby. Some find interest in running a railway from commercially-made models, satisfying themselves with the laying of their own track and the construction of station buildings and wayside equipment. Some choose purely the running or efficiency side of the locomotives themselves, whether electrically or steam driven, while others go for "scale" above all. A fourth category prefer general scale appearance of layout, particularly accessories and scenic effects.

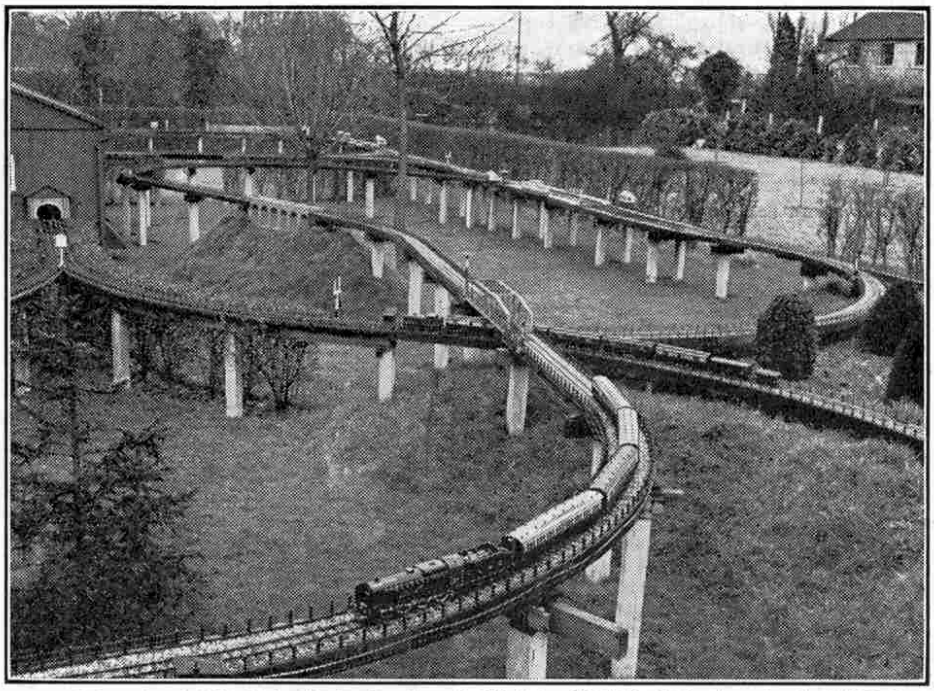
I mention all these four phases of the model railway hobby because I happen to know a remarkable man who has been successful in combining nearly all of them. He is Mr. Victor Harrison of Bishop's Stortford, first known among model men as a builder of model steamers, but of later years much in the public eye as a model railroad owner. He tells me that as a boy he was the possessor of a gauge "0" clockwork model railway, laid on boards supported by "Tate Cube" sugar boxes! The rails were tinplate, and all the stock was of German origin, as in those days there were no English models available.

The scope of model railways in those days was very limited, so Mr. Harrison turned his energies to the building of model steamers, and not until his middle twenties was his dormant interest in his earlier hobby roused. His friend Henry Greenly was editor of a new little paper, "*Model Railways*," which began to describe new methods of constructing wagons and coaches; and before Mr. Harrison knew where he was he had constructed all the wagons and coaches for a passenger and goods train, but had no railway or locomotives.

It was difficult at that time to decide upon a gauge to adopt, as model railways were really in their infancy. The choice then was between $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. gauge (then known as gauge 3), gauge 2, or gauge 1 ($1\frac{3}{4}$ in. between the rails). This, you will notice, was before gauge "0" had come into the picture, and Mr. Harrison decided on gauge 1, which in 1911 was becoming very popular. He was essentially a steam model locomotive enthusiast, and there were no gauge "0" steam locomotives then except externally fired ones, which are not successful in the open air.

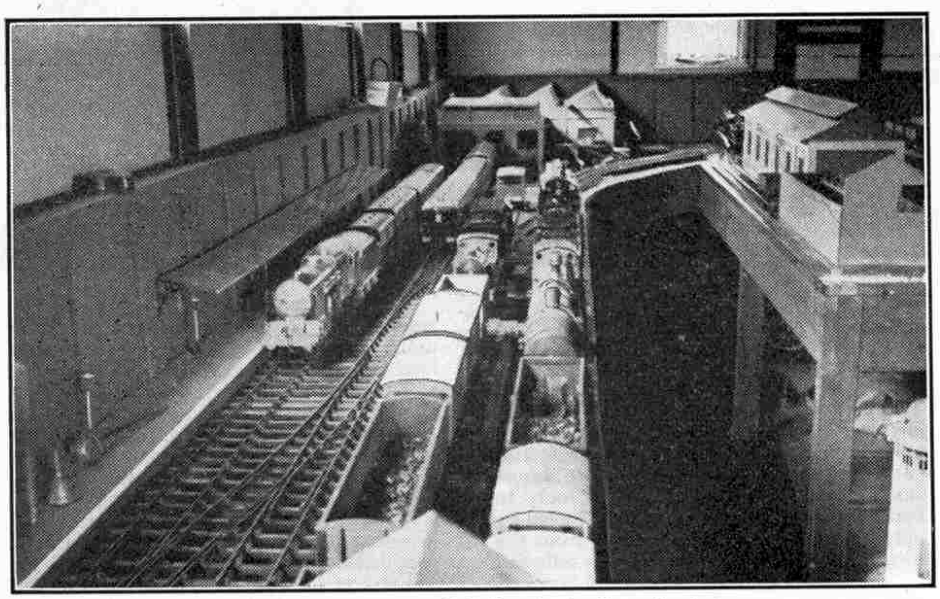
His first railway at Hertford had been in existence for 25 years when in February 1932 he moved to Bishop's Stortford. He says of this: "The moving of my workshop, models, and last but not least the model railway, was a nightmare. The railway was elevated on posts, on the principle advocated by Mr. George Winteringham. Model men will be well able to imagine the work entailed in pulling up 300 ft. of permanent way and points, together with wood foundation posts, etc."

He has an eye for the beautiful, and his railway, although it is spread over the picturesque Bishop's Stortford garden, in no way detracts from the surroundings. He had to plan quickly on arrival at his new home, for it was essential to erect his railway immediately; and he had to choose a site that could be expanded, in order to settle the layout of the garden itself. Every spare moment from February 1932 onward was devoted to the work, and by July it was possible to open a portion of the line for traffic.



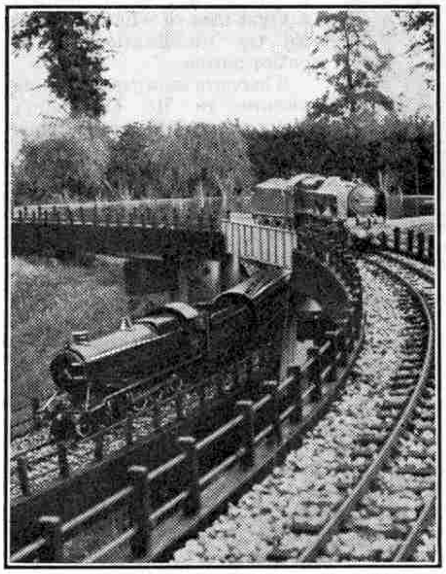
A general view of part of Mr. Victor Harrison's railway, L.M.S. "Royal Scot" in the foreground and a G.W.R. local train passing under the girder bridge.

The pictures illustrating this article are of his present railway.



Interior view of "Hurst Central" Station, showing the engine shed.

which has progressed amazingly. Every year he has added something new, until to-day he has 37 locomotives, 41 passenger coaches, 58 goods vehicles, a third-coach S.R. battery train, a steam-rail motor coach and trailer, and a snow plough. He has the full variety of clockwork, electric and steam on his railway. He has commercially-built models, for the majority, including some very fine scale productions; but he would also remind you of his "owner built" productions, which date back to the days when, with Henry Greenly's co-operation, he built an engine with coal-fired boiler that was described in the now defunct "*Model Railways*." He says of it: "It was a success in spite of the many faults I later discovered, and even to-day gives a wonderful performance both as regards running and load pulling."

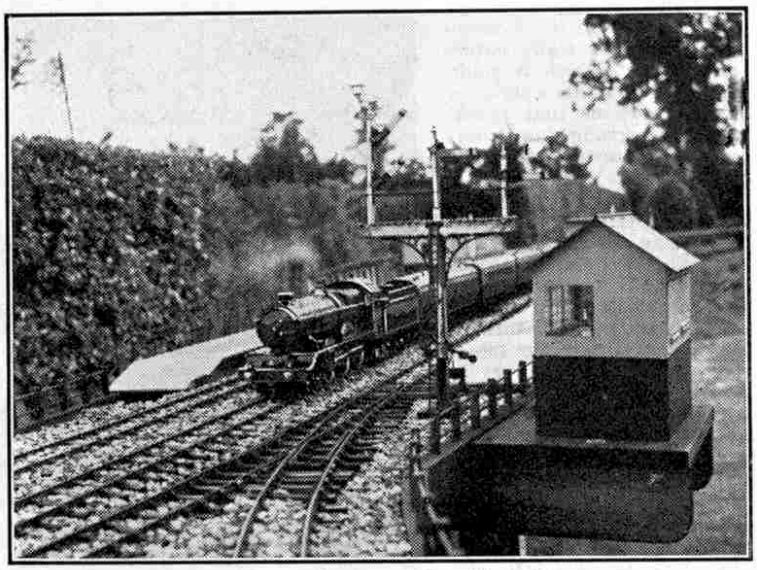


High and low levels—the G.W.R. "Consolidation" (Smithies type boiler), and the L.M.S. "Royal Scot" (by Bassett-Lowke Ltd.) running over box girder bridge.

Among his locomotives the outstanding ones are the G.W.R. "*City of Truro*," the G.W.R. "*King George V*," and a coal-fired model, a G.W.R. Consolidation. This last engine is also very powerful, and when working resembles the prototype very closely indeed. It has pulled with ease trucks loaded with coal, and gave a most realistic performance when going up the 1 in 70 rise. The "*City of Truro*" is a coal-fired model; a small one, but nevertheless she puts up a wonderful performance, doing three to four laps to one firing. He has also a German type tank engine that has done on one firing eight laps; and this will mean something to you when I tell you that the main line lap run is 430 ft., not to speak of other lines running up to 287 ft., a branch line of 228 ft., and sidings of 221 ft.

Of his spirit-fired engines, Mr. Harrison uses both the Smithies type boiler and one of his own design. The latter is a locomotive type boiler, but in place of a large number of small tubes he employs three large ones and has three to four sloping cross water tubes in the fire-box. This boiler has proved as efficient as the Smithies type.

Mr. Harrison is a patron of the leading commercial model-making firms, and distinguished amateurs, and last but not least is himself a practical engineer with skill as a model designer and maker. In his opinion anyone who has a preference for a model railway in the open need have no qualms as to its success in $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. gauge. He says: "My old railway gave no trouble during its 25 years. The $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. gauge commercial engines available for those who do not want to build their own can be made to operate successfully. It is not necessary to go in for $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. gauge or coal-fired engines, or even high-pressure engines with packed cylinders and valve glands, if one wishes to operate one's railway in the open. The only thing that is essential for a garden railway is that the main terminal station is under cover."



G.W.R. express passing through "Lone Pine" Station.

Mr. Harrison does not make his station building a workshop, and in this respect he is wise, because it always gives the railway an untidy appearance. He has a special room in his home devoted to his model making. Everything there is laid out for use at a moment's notice, and he can go in, turn the key, and with the click of the lock be in another world.