MADDER VALLEY AT PENDON

Small-scale railway modelling can be conveniently divided into two distinct eras: before Madder Valley and after Madder Valley. The impact John Ahern made on our hobby was fundamental and far-reaching.

The effects were twofold: the frankly imitative layouts, where the gentle eccentricities of the original were at times carried beyond all reasonable limits, and the derivative, where the principle of blending a railway into an imaginary community was followed.

Today, thanks to the generosity of his widow, John Ahern's masterpiece is on public view at Pendon Museum. It seems unlikely that the layout will be operative this year, for quite apart from the minor deterioration which occurred in storage, and the inevitable small mishaps attendant on the dismantling and re-erection of a line never intended as a portable system, just before his death he had begun an extensive reconstruction of a portion of the line, and it will be necessary to restore this section to its original condition.

However, this is of little importance, since the main attraction to most enthusiasts must undoubtedly be the magnificent buildings. Some portions of the layout are familiar to all older readers, but there are many sections which were never fully photographed.

It is worth mentioning at this stage that the whole of the Madder Valley is scratch built, for the simple reason that at the time of construction no kits existed. This is modelling at its highest and most satisfying level, and we recommend a visit. Pendon is today the greatest single source of inspiration for the serious modeller—and incidentally a delightful venue for a weekend trip.

How to get there.

The map shows the location of Pendon in relation to main roads. For non-motorists there is a pleasant 1.5-mile walk from Appleford halt on the Western Region Oxford line, while there is a bus from Reading to Clifton Hampden.
Madderport is well known to most enthusiasts; it is perhaps the oldest 4mm, scale miniature town. The corner by the China Clipper may be well known, but it could hardly be called hackneyed. The loco in the foreground is a Himalaya-Darjeeling railway tank.

Gammon End is at present subject to considerable upheaval and only this corner could be adequately photographed. However, by the time this article is printed the area should be virtually restored.