

THE EDEN VALLEY LINE. PART II - KIRKBY STEPHEN & MUSGRAVE.

It was once boasted that Kirkby Stephen with a population of a mere 1500 souls, had twice as many stations as Crewe! Kirkby's stations were well away from the population they were supposed to serve. The Midland line ran some three miles away and was so close to the next village that for a while, it was officially known as 'Kirkby Stephen & Ravenstonedale', (eat your heart out Llanfair PG!). Having mentioned that fact, the midland will take no further part in this article.

The North-Eastern station was a bit nearer the town but even so, you could throw a stone into the nearby village of Nateby.

KIRKBY STEPHEN - AN INTRODUCTION.

It would be impossible to write an article about this station without also introducing the South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway (SDLUR), for without the latter, the importance of Kirkby Stephen on the North-Eastern Railway would have been greatly diminished. The reason for this is that the railway carried vast quantities of coke from the North-East to West Cumberland in connection with the Iron & Ore Industry and in turn, ironstone was carried to Tees-side. It was from Kirkby that trains heading Eastwards began the tortuous climb towards Stainmore, some 1300+ feet above sea level. Extra locos were required for double heading, banking or both and West Auckland and Kirkby Stephen shedded the necessary engines. In its heyday, Kirkby could accommodate 16 locomotives.

There were stringent restrictions on how many wagons a loco could haul without assistance and examples of, say, J21 haulage were as follows:

Empty Coke wagons travelling Eastbound could be hauled by one engine if the load did not exceed 21 vehicles. Two locos were then required and a third, at the rear, was needed for the maximum allowed over Stainmore of 42 empties.

Loaded wagons travelling Westward were allowed only 12 wagons to a loco, increasing to a maximum of 33 with 3 locos.

In later years, when certain restrictions were lifted and larger locos traversed the line, these loadings were adjusted.

THE SHED.

Kirkby's shed was peculiar inasmuch as all electrical equipment contained therein was driven by a turbo-generator powered by the nearby River Eden.

Because of the Shed's size, not all of its locos could be accommodated under cover. For many years, the weight restrictions mentioned above meant that only the smaller type of tender locos could be seen such as the J21s. However, in 1954, these restrictions were inexplicably removed and for the final 8 years of the line's life, much larger machines appeared. These included Q6 0-8-0s, J39 0-6-0s and 4MT 2-6-0s. The final passenger locos were 3MT 2-6-2Ts.

THE STATION.

Kirkby Stephen (the 'East' was only used for the last 12 years of the Station's life), was a 2-platform island station with an overall roof. This roof covered the major parts of both platforms. An electric lift, again driven by the River Eden's turbo-generator, travelled from platform level to the roadway on the bridge above which took the traveller into Kirkby Stephen town.

Both Tebay and Penrith trains used the same down platform whilst the 'up' was for Barnard Castle/Darlington passenger trains. Mineral and Coke traffic used the tracks immediately outside the passenger roads.

For a country junction, Kirkby Stephen was large in area and facilities. There was, as mentioned previously, the Engine Shed, but additionally, there was a large warehouse-cum-goods shed, cattle dock, weighbridge etc.

The Station area was crossed by two bridges and in turn, one of them crossed the River Eden. Again, reference to the enclosed diagram will show these features.

Despite this large area, the tracks which passed through the station soon diverged back to two lines. To the south-west, the left hand one proceeded to Tebay whilst the one on the right was for the EVR. To the north-east, the lines to Stainmore were double track, ie one up and one down.

CLOSURE AND BEYOND.

After closure in 1962, a single line remained for the thrice weekly goods which left the Midlands junction at Appleby and traversed the EVR through Warcop, Musgrave and Kirkby Stephen to a nearby quarry. The station at Kirkby was partly demolished - the overall roof was the first part to go - and the remaining central portion remains as a factory. The Goods Shed remains in very good condition, again as industrial premises, and a coal yard still occupies the area. The overbridge and stationmaster's house also remain intact.

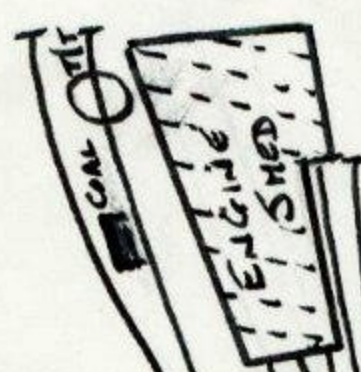
MUSGRAVE.

The first station along the EVR travelling from Kirkby to Penrith was Musgrave. It served the village of Great Musgrave and was perhaps the 'sleepiest' of all the EVR Stations. It had the very basic facilities of one siding for coal and a minimal amount of freight. As would be expected, it closed 10 years before the line's final demise.

The Station was staffed by a handful of men who took pride in their work and the platform flower-bed was always, in Summer months, planted out with the words- 'MUSGRAVE FOR BROUGH' (a village some $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles away).

The Station Building is now a private dwelling-house with most of its original architecture intact including, as was the thing with the EVR builders, the numeral '1860' over the main entrance. The old weigh-house stands in an amazingly well-kept condition.

TO BARBERS CASTLE



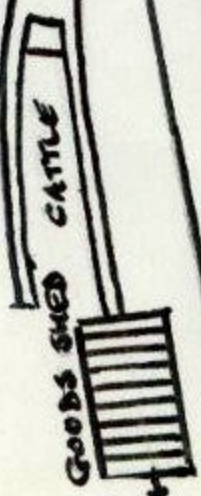
60cm

RIVER



KIRBY STEPHEN (N.E.R.).

North



ROAD BRIDGE TO K. STEPHEN

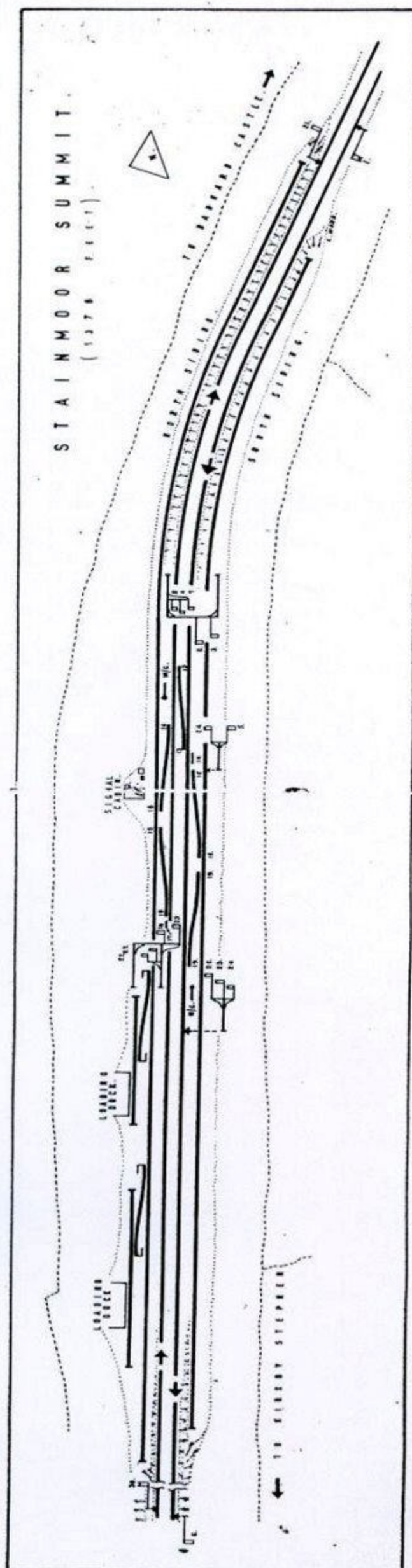
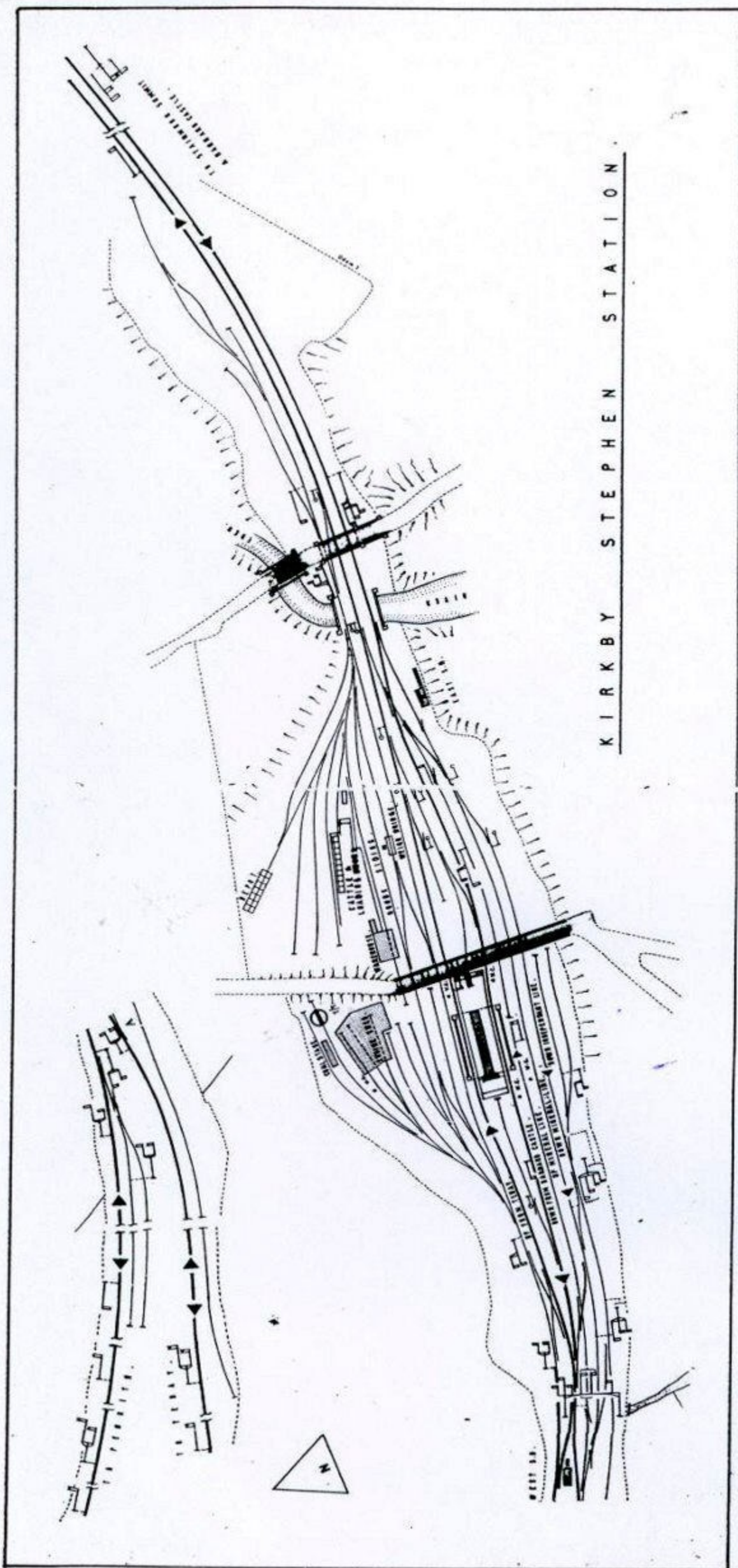
OVERALL ROOF

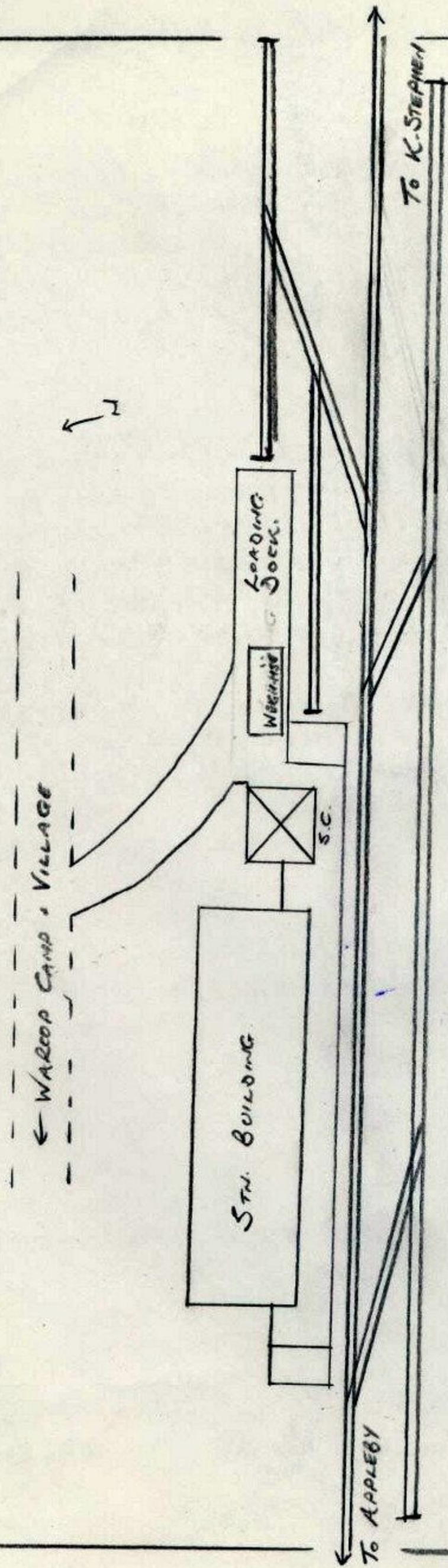
WATER

TO PENRITH



TO TEBAY





WARCOP STN. LAYOUT
(AS AT CLOSURE).