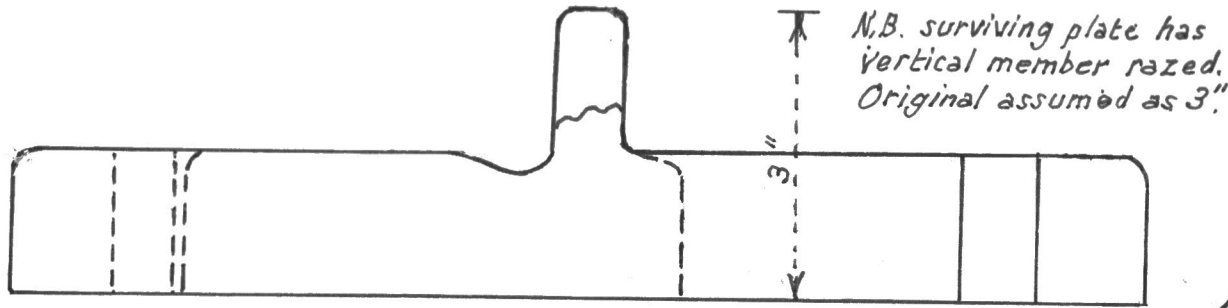


BUDE CANAL SAND PLATEWAY

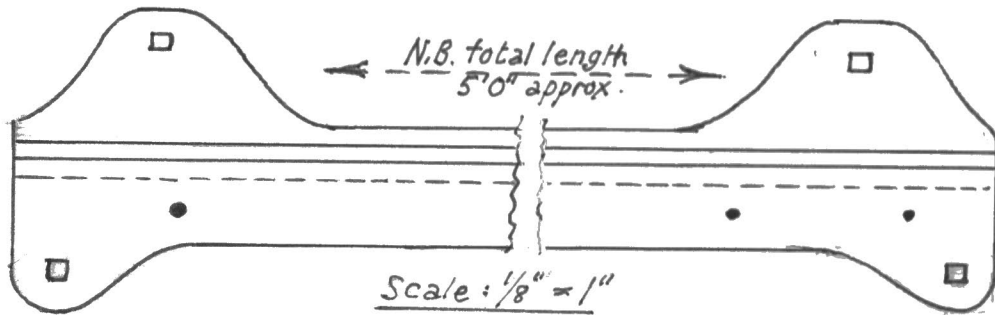
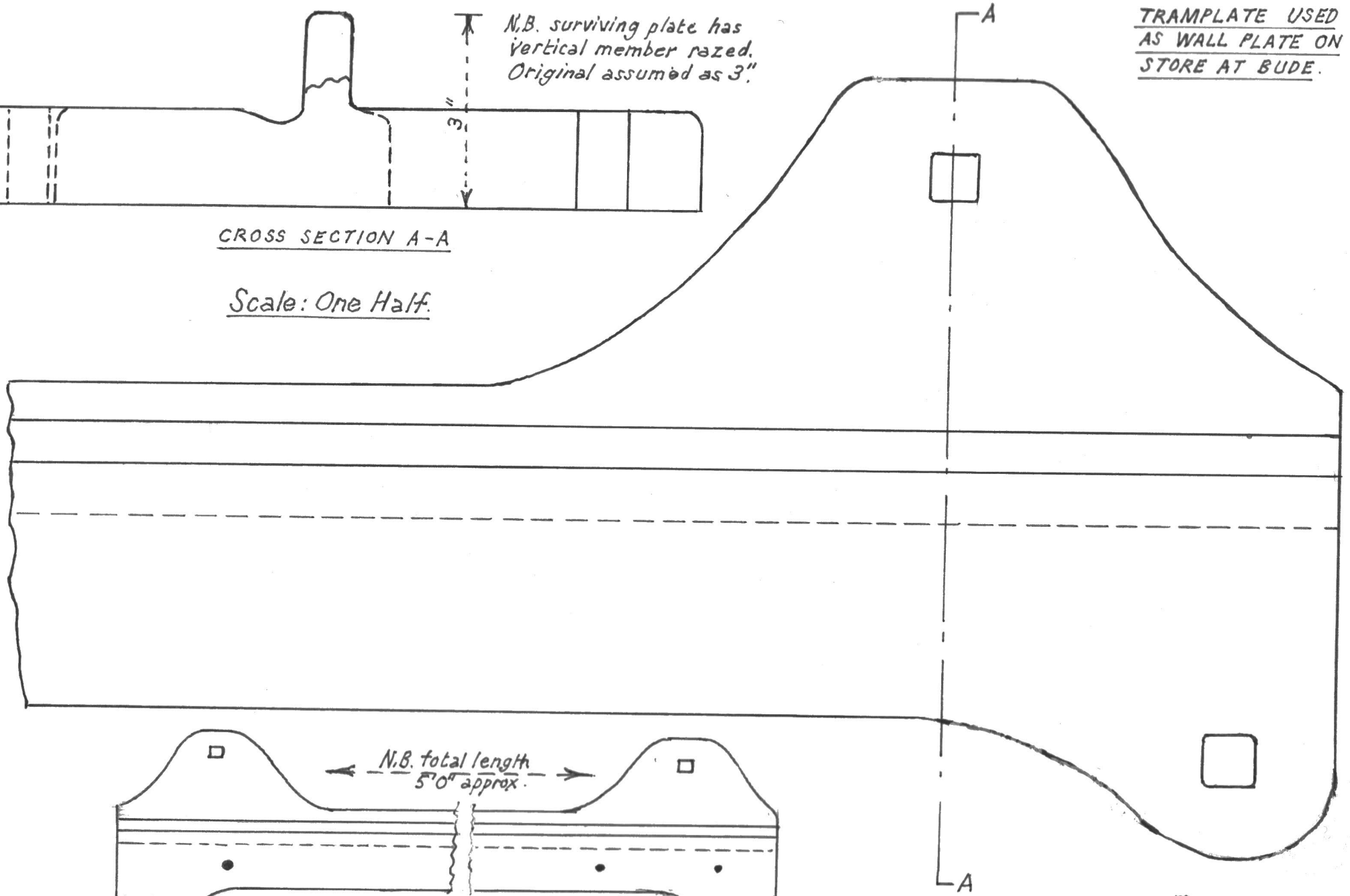


CROSS SECTION A-A

Scale: One Half.

N.B. surviving plate has vertical member razed. Original assumed as 3"

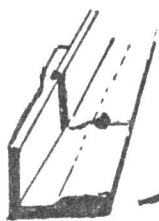
TRAMPLATE USED AS WALL PLATE ON STORE AT BUDE.



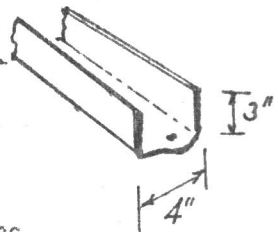
Scale: 1/8" = 1"

D. J. W.
12/87.

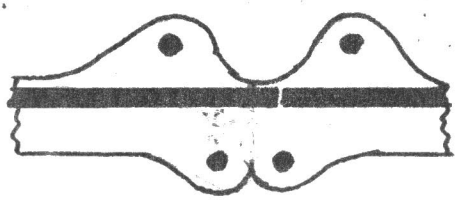
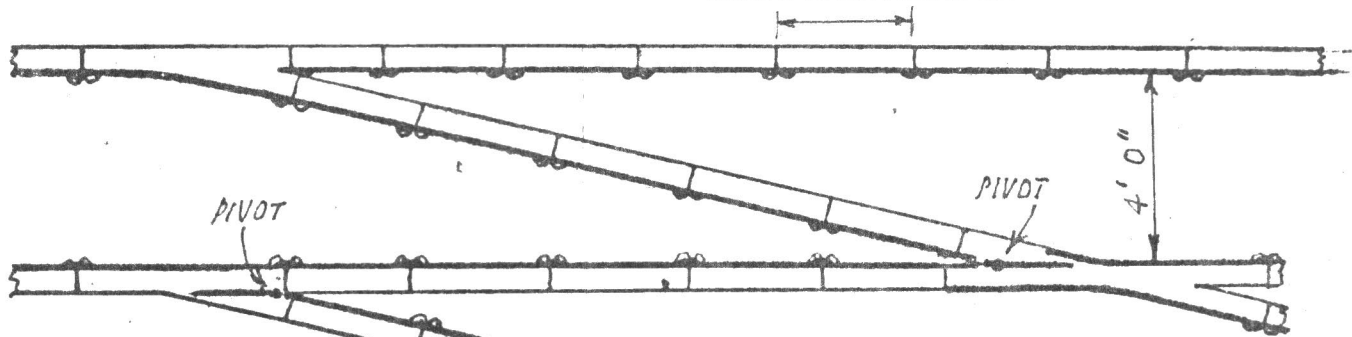
PROBABLE SHAPE OF CHANNEL SECTION (9' 10")



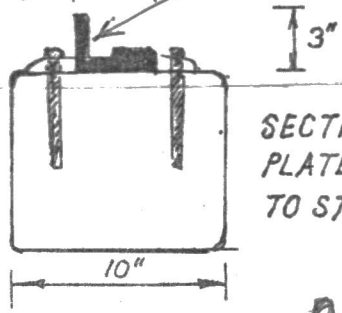
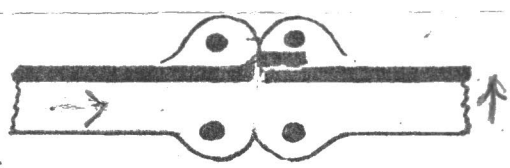
SINGLE SPIKE FASTENING IN PAVED SECTIONS



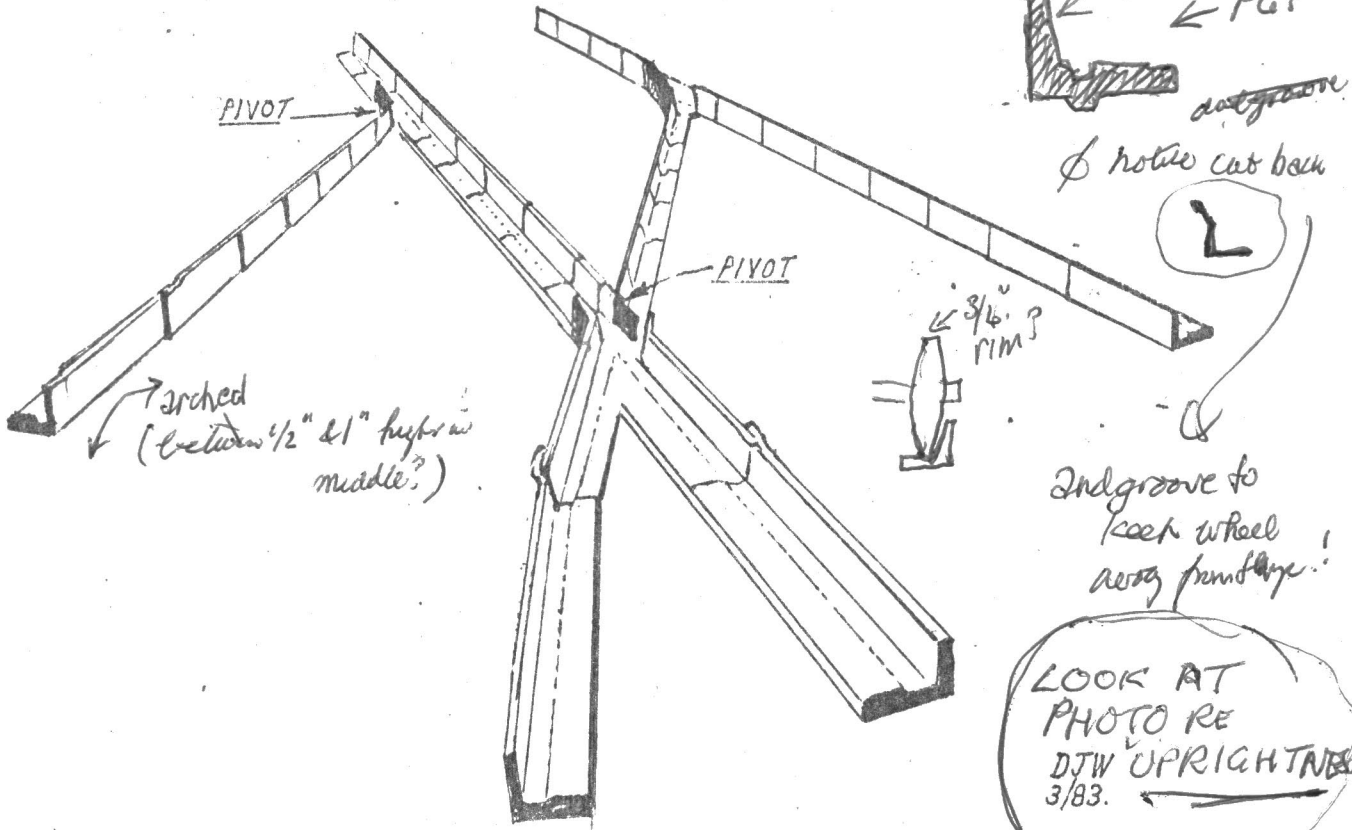
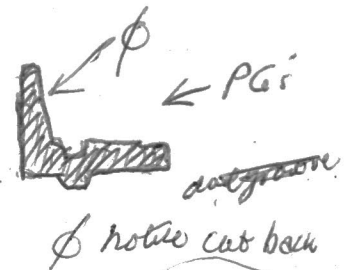
Generally 2' 9" between stone block centres



* PGR's suggestion of concave/convex ends (for curves)



SECTION THROUGH PLATE RAIL SPIKED TO STONE BLOCK.



Ind groove to keep wheel away from edge!

LOOK AT PHOTO RE DJW UPRIGHTNES 3/83.

BIDE CANAL SAND PLATEWAY

PROBABLE LAYOUT OF POINT AND CROSSING.

The Four-Foot Sand Plateway

In the golden summers of the 1920s and 1930s the sand tramway on the south side of Summerlease Beach at Bude was an institution. While the trucks were filled to pinnacles, the horse munched hay from a bag tied to a mooring post. All round children played in the sand or fished for crabs from the nearby Ifon Bridge. Rather alarming was the previous approach of empty trucks, several at a time, rumbling down from the upper stage by gravity, and usually unattended.

These steel trucks were acquired by the Urban District Council as replacements for the original wooden wagons of 1823. For 100 years the 4' 0" gauge Sand Plateway, part of the assets of Bude Harbour & Canal Co, remained a minor part of the canal operation and maintenance. The original intention was to load tub boats on the beach and float them through the sea lock to the canal basin. A trial took place in April 1821. At the suggestion of Lord Stanhope a 'railroad' was subsequently adopted to transport sand from the beach to a stage by the canal. The estimated expense was £600, but delevered sand would be 1d per ton cheaper.

It is not known from where materials and wagons were obtained. Granite was available at Penryn for stone blocks, cast iron plates may have been manufactured in the Forest of Dean, or possibly N.E. England, as a considerable tonnage was required even for this short branch. Shipping in, of course,

was no problem at Bude. The plates, L-shaped, were 4 inches wide by 3 inches deep either 4' 11" or 3' 0" long and weighed 50lb per linear yard. Channel U-shaped plates, laid by the sand stage, were 9' 10" long and 60lb per yard. The granite blocks 10"X10"X10" carried plate joints secured by one or two metal spikes depending on the shape of the plates. The spikes were wedged in their holes by pitching. Examples of both plates may be seen on Compass Point (jack stays for the flagstaff) and in the sluice gates near the Museum. The L-plate used as a tie-bar end on the old Coal Stores is a more elaborate version with shaped 'ears' for pinning down.

Plateways were contemporaneous with many in the Kingdom, though becoming outmoded in the 1820s. New "railways" in the 1830s employed "parallel" rails set in chairs, although stone blocks were the normal supports at first. The combination of cast iron edge rails and the blocks under the increasing weight of steam locomotives, adopted by the London & Greenwich, the London & Birmingham and the London & Southampton Railways soon gave way to wholesale replacement by creosoted wooden cross-ties or sleepers (and wrought iron rails).

The plates on the inclined planes of the Bude Canal were again Channel section and appear similar to those on the sand wagonway. From evidence of breakages on the planes there seems no doubt that loaded sand tubs were punishing. The wagons were lighter. However cast iron plates remained until 1923 and replacements, possibly manufactured at the Marhamchurch Foundry,

were similar. The GWR, incidently, continued to cast plates at Swindon for the Whimberry Slade Plateway into the 1930s. Only photographs remain of the points and crossings of which 2 sets were in the loop and one for the sidings at the Wharf. It is not certain how the fan of sidings on Summerleaze Beach was fed or even how the plates themselves were supported. The 'jetty' beyond Iron Bridge was topped by granite blocks. After the exposures in January 1980 the 4' 0" gauge holes were apparent in these (also still to be seen in the surviving stone blocks in the 'loop' area). Stone blocks would seem to be useless to support track in soft or wet sand. On the Middlebere Plateway (Dorset), some excavation by the Southampton members of the Permanent Way Institution revealed ties of round 'poles' between pairs of stone blocks in softer ground. Such 'L' and 'U' plates exposed near Chapel Rocks in 1980 just lay parallel. It would be interesting to know if anyone present, then, noticed remnants of wooden 'sleepers'.

Maintenance of the wooden wagons may have been easier, though their 90-degree rotating and tipping mechanisms might cause problems with wear. It is not known who maintained them, but the Company employed carpenters and the nearby forge could handle metal work.

Some interesting evidence is forthcoming from 1908. Apparently 140 feet of 'rails' were required for the top of the new sand stage to meet the extended LSWR siding in the Wharf -

also for the ballast stage (next the Canal). The Marhamchurch Foundry quoted a price not exceeding 12-0s per hundredweight and their estimate of £22-5-0 was accepted. The price of the sand stage itself - a substantial stone wall and fill - was put at £454/15/0.

Included in the sale of the Canal to the Stratton & Bude Urban District Council in 1901, the Plateway's existence continued until 1923. Vivian & Sons had operated it since 1876, the wagons as part of their general lease. The plates and way were presumably still maintained by the Canal Co. The Vivians supplied sand to the tub boats (and generally?) until 1887. Although the upper reaches of the Canal had been abandoned from 1891, the harbour, basins and Plateway remained operative. Wagonloads of sand, presumably loaded by contractors hired by the Canal Co, continued until the purchase in 1901 and by the UDC from then onward. The establishment of the high stage in 1907/8 shows renewed efforts to trade in sand, the LSWR obviously reciprocating with their siding extension and perceiving a profitable traffic to inland destinations. The Council advertized in March 1908 for the right to use their 'sand trucks and rails' by payment of 3d per ton, plus 1/- per truck dock dues; 'blown sand' at 1p per ton. In May a Mr Gliddon offered 6d per ton.

The plateway in the 1920s had got into a poor state. There was talk of abandonment and prospects of getting a haulier to take the sand to the LSWR station sidings. However, the chance

to acquire rails and wagons from a local source came up in 1923. The Bude Haven Recreation Ground Ltd had used a 2' 0" gauge light railway system for the construction of its new grounds on the former strand below Nanny Moore's bridge. Thus the conversion from Plateway to Tramway took place during the winter of 1923/4 and was completed by March. More track was obtained from Thomas Ward Ltd, including the well-known turntable (£4-10-0). The displaced plates were sold to Mr Staddon for £3-4-0 per ton, and his offer of 10/- per wagon was accepted.

Before leaving the subject of the Plateway it is worth noting that the Canal map of 1826 shows a 'railroad' between the canal below the Falcon Hotel and some limekilns near Efford Cottage. Presumably plate rails were used on this line. Additionally, the map shows a 'Rounds Casting House' situated near the Lynstone Lay By. Whether this refers to casting iron into moulds is open to conjecture. If so, then it is possible that the plates may have been manufactured here in 1822/3 and not imported. A further mystery concerns the 'tramroad' used to convey rock from Compass Point to the Breakwater reconstruction in 1838. The use of cast iron plates seems incompatible considering the alleged weights of the boulders and a rather undulating (?) course. 'Edge' rails were available by then in 'flat bottom' (or Vignales') section which would have better served.