

## ***February 2016***

Well here we are - another new year and another Newsletter! We have quite a mixed bag in this issue, ranging from the highly technical to the thought provoking, with some general information and a superb layout feature thrown in for good measure. So, without further ado...

### ***The News!***

#### **From Neil Lancaster**

##### **'DCC or not DC'**

That is the question. For many years we have accommodated both DC and DCC at the Convention to cater for Members' needs. Indeed, the Poole club designed (if that is the right word) a layout to include a DC track for those members who (at the time) saw no advantage in converting stock to DCC and had no plans to do so.

Conversely, some groups adopted DCC within the groups early on and so far as I am aware, provide module set ups and running purely for DCC. Both Black Diamonds and the Gosport Group have adopted this as their preferred operation and this has led to interesting configurations in modular set up.

I have no information as to how many members still operate with DC either entirely or with a smattering of DCC stock. I think it would be useful information to have on hand to pass onto groups and formulate a strategy

for the Convention. Certainly my impressions of the extensive modular set-ups, which are seen at major exhibitions, tend to be DCC operation.

The reason why this query has come about is that we have had some initial discussion about the form and set up of the modules at the Convention. Potentially, there could be a 'move away' from the Poole type layout (continuous run with a DC facility) to the more lengthy 'operation style' set up followed by the Black Diamonds and Gosport Groups as seen at Derby this year.

I have mixed feelings on this. I will not enter the DCC or DC debate. Whatever presses your buttons is fine by me. However, I wouldn't want to hold back the progress and development of N-Trak if there are very few members out there still using DC. It could be an interesting debate but I think any decision (be it a 'one off' or 'permanent') needs to be prefaced by accurate information on control preferences.

I am really only talking about our Convention here, as local groups know their members. However, if we are to consider something different for 2017, your views would be welcome. I have heard that both the Gosport Group and Black Diamonds are considering joining up their layout at certain events, (possibly a future Convention), hence my need to gauge members reactions here.

There is of course layout set up time to consider and the backup that two independent layouts can provide.

Essential when some of the modules are left at home a couple of hundred miles away (sorry BD lads!)

Hopefully this is food for thought and we can discuss this either through the newsletter or at the Convention.

Neil

#### Change of e-mail address

As I am about to change my e-mail provider within the next couple of months, may I ask members to contact me on my other account during the transition. My Gmail account is [lancasterlan55@gmail.com](mailto:lancasterlan55@gmail.com)

Thanks.  
See you at the Convention

Neil

### **From Jim Dickinson**

#### **Obituary - Tim Healey**

It is with great regret that we have to inform you of the death of Tim Healy in a road accident on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2015. Tim was one of the founder members of Black Diamonds N Gauge Group and a member the NMRA for 19 years. His early life was spent living beside the GWR, of which he was a great fan and then followed 22 years in the Army becoming a Major in the RAOC. He then worked for Coventry Climax and House of Frazer before retiring.

Tim had a passion for building prototypically accurate track and progressed from OO to P4 where he was one of the founder members. He then progressed to P160 and started to build a small layout on which he operated a UP RS3 and had various trucks which he converted by re-profiling the

wheels. Unfortunately he found reliability to be a problem so changed to N Gauge to get a US based layout up and running. This was based upon Cajon Pass which we had the pleasure of helping to build and exhibit.

He was involved in helping build the first Black Diamonds N Trak modular layout. This proved to be an unsuccessful venture due to limited storage and constraints of the standard so a new system was investigated. In 1997 Tim was part of the group that developed what became the Black Diamonds twin and single track standards that are now used by a number of groups. Also in 1997 he was involved with ourselves in building the first two end loops which are still in regular use today. He then worked with Andrew Dickinson and the late John Farrell to build the "creek" which was based upon the Donner Pass and is the Black Diamonds best known module. He then worked with others building the large and "J" corners, crossovers, spacing boards and "S" boards as well as being involved in board building and track laying on most of the group modules.

He was very willing to pass on his skills in building baseboards and track laying, extolling the virtues of reliable fault free running. A stickler for accuracy he once got upset with a comment from George Lamb and answered "ish, what size is ish?"

Even at the age of 89 he was still a very active member of the group having just relayed the track on the RH end loop and was planning a major re-vamp to the "creek".

Jim Dickinson

## **Alan Dobson Writes**

A reminder that the Gosport Group will be displaying Solent Summit at the Brighton Modelworld Exhibition from 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> February. There will also be a Gosport Group Exhibition on the 20<sup>th</sup> February at the usual Alverstoke venue which will include Mohawk Valley. This show was originally scheduled for the 13<sup>th</sup> but has had to move for various reasons.

Most members will be aware that Alan has had a number of serious health issues recently and writes that as a result he is unlikely to be able to attend the Convention. I'm sure that all members will join me in sending best wishes to Alan and Sylvia.

## ***A Layout Described***

Lars-Erik Sodenkamp from the PH&LF Railroad Association in The Netherlands has sent this article describing his New Eastbrook Modules.

### **New Eastbrook, A Fictional Town Along a NYC Mainline**

**Article by Lars-Erik Sodenkamp, Photos by Lars-Erik - Courtesy of NY Central Modeler Magazine**

*This article has also been published in the NY Central Modeler of the NYCSHS. Please take a look at their website: <http://nycshs.org/for-the-modeler/nycentral-modeler/>*

At the great NMRA UK Convention in Derby October 2015 it was an honor to attend the convention with our N-scale club The PH&LF from The Netherlands. As part of our

layout I brought my three modules along. Herewith I want to thank the organization and all the participants for their hospitality and the wonderful weekend!

Why N-Trak and North American prototype for a NYC fan living in the Netherlands? The interest for American Railroads has been in my mind as of the late seventies. One of my brothers, Hans, had some books about American Railroads and I was impressed by the look and size of the engines and trains. One day we bought the Rivarossi catalogue and on the front of the catalogue was the beautiful drawing of a streamlined New York Central System Hudson leaving La Salle Street Station. Ever since I'm a NYCS fan!

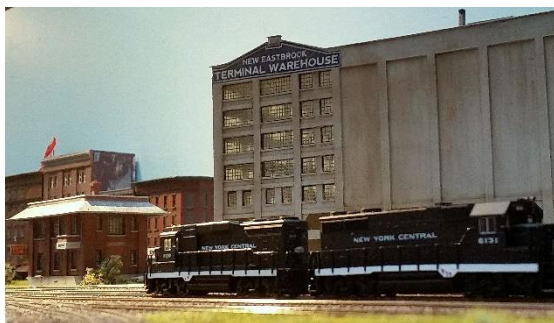
Due to the lack of enough space for a layout at home and to have the opportunity to run long trains, my two brothers, a friend, and I decided to start the N-Trak club PH&LF Railroad Association ([www.phlfrfa.com](http://www.phlfrfa.com)). Together we could build modular sections of a layout, which we could bring together at shows and run some long trains. Soon more members followed thanks to our website and the layout grew. In November 2003 we had our first appearance at a big Model Railroad show in the Netherlands and it was a great success. We ran long trains with a couple of engines in front. Our record train was 110 cars long, awesome!

From the start of building the modules, scenery and especially buildings had my interest. I want to create modules with scratchbuilt buildings to give it a different look than scenery with the same kits

you see on other layouts. With the Internet I have a lot of possibilities to find interesting buildings for my modules. One of my sources is the Library of Congress site: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>

But I Google a lot too for pictures of buildings. Furthermore one of my brothers has a lot of railroad books of the NYCS, although his main interest is the PRR (everyone makes some mistakes in his life ;-)). One of the buildings that has always caught my eye is the Great Lakes Terminal Warehouse in Toledo, OH, with the big sign on the site of the warehouse with the white letters on a black background.

The Terminal Warehouse is situated at the first of three N-Trak modules. On this module is a junction where a mainline of the PRR joins the tracks of the NYC mainline. The PRR has trackage rights for some miles to run on the NYC line. Given the busy junction, a signal tower at this point is highly desirable.



***GP30 #6118 and GP35 #6131 cross New Eastbrook junction in a late evening sun 1965. In the background New Eastbrook Terminal Warehouse and New Eastbrook tower.***

As I wanted to scratchbuild an original New York Central tower, I

did some research and selected the now demolished West Detroit Tower. The real West Detroit Tower was located three miles from the huge (former) Michigan Central Depot at the mainline from New York via South New Eastbrook, A Fictive Town Along a NYC Mainline NY Central Modeler 1st Quarter 2016 33 Ontario, Canada, to Chicago. West Detroit tower was located at the intersection of this line with the Norfolk & Western/Detroit & Toledo Shore Line.

### **New Eastbrook Terminal Warehouse (Great Lakes Terminal Warehouse)**

For the size of the Warehouse I used Google Streetview. The building still exists and I took some "photos" of the building in Streetview.

<https://www.google.com/maps/streetview/>

Cars and people near the building were a reference for measuring the dimensions of the building. Although I'm not sure if the dimensions are correct the main purpose to build the Warehouse was to get the look and feeling of the original Warehouse. As a modeler you have to do what you like in your scale world, so I added a track for loading and unloading cars underneath the building, a track that doesn't exist in the real world. But this gives me some nice switching possibilities.



***New Eastbrook Terminal Warehouse was still a busy place in the sixties. The building is of the same design as the Great Lakes Terminal Warehouse in Toledo.***

The building is made of styrene sheets. To get the concrete look I mixed a couple of paints and afterwards I weathered the building. The windows are all made from clear sheets. I scribed the sheets with a sharp knife to get the windowpanes. The scribed lines I filled with a cloth with some paint in a way that the paint will fill the scribed lines and the windows themselves will stay clear.

For the lettering of the building I used the "tissue decal method". I print the text or advertisement on one layer of tissue paper, which, I carefully stick to the building with diluted white glue.

### **New Eastbrook tower (West Detroit Tower)**

On the Internet I started looking for pictures of the tower. I had found a few photos of all sides of the tower. Based upon these photos and Google Sketchup, I could determine the (approximate) size of the building and could convert the building to N-scale.



I made the walls from 1 mm thick styrene. These styrene walls were covered with Slaters brick sheets. The windows are made in the same way as I used for the warehouse. To simulate tar roofing I also issued one layer of a tissue, which I cut in small strips. The strips were glued to the roof with diluted white glue to which I added some black acrylic paint.

Although the West Detroit doesn't exist in the real world anymore, it lives on in my modules.

### **Railfanning in New Eastbrook**

On a sunny October day I went railfanning in New Eastbrook and took some pictures.



***NYC FT #1601 with a freight train from Jasperburg passes New Eastbrook Tower.***



**The tired looking NYC U25B #2509 is at the head end of a yard run from Jasper Yard. New Eastbrook,**



**NYC NW2 #8769 is switching some freight cars at the New Eastbrook Terminal Warehouse.**



**Headed by NYC E8A #4054, the 20th Century Limited is at New Eastbrook Junction.**



**Overview of the three New Eastbrook N-trak light modules. Light modules because of the different size (91.5 cm by 45cm)**

## **Technical Issues**

Rex Nichamin has sent this piece describing the construction of a particular piece of pointwork he needed for his layout. Many of the methods and techniques Rex describes are appropriate to many other types of pointwork construction. Please note that for clarity of reproduction I have put Rex's diagrams in a separate appendix at the end of the newsletter as they would have been too small if included in our normal two column format.

### **Building a Wye Point**

At a late stage in my track laying, I needed a wye turn, at the top of the Big Hill, just before the entrance to the spiral tunnel. My track is Micro Engineering code 55. Two points were required, one left and one right to precisely fit existing curves, and be compatible. There was only one alternative. I had a thought, of taking two lengths of code 55, and combining them to form a wye shape with exact radii:-

Take two pieces of track, long enough to form our wye shaped point, about 20cm (8"). Place side by side, and cut the two inside rails with a Xuron cutter. See Diagram 'A'. The inner ends will form the frog. The outers will become the stock rails.

Now draw, on paper, an exact pattern of the point, the radius and curve of the stock rails as accurately as possible. For ease of removal, spot glue (use Evostick) the pattern to a flat base of medium balsa ( $\frac{1}{4}$ "). Also draw a straight line from the frog centre to the centre of track at the toe. See Diagram 'B'.

Take one section of track and carefully pin to the drawing using Lill pins. Mark and then cut the sleepers at the centre line. Remove track and then repeat procedure with the opposite side. Sleepers will hopefully butt each other when reassembled. They can be twisted in situ to straighten them.

When you are satisfied with the set-up, remove from the base, noting the retaining pin holes. (Use a marker pen if necessary.)

Prepare the underside of the rails to receive four printed circuit board (PCB) sleepers, to be soldered. They all cross from one stock rail to the other as in Diagram 'B'. Rail positions should be tinned, also the PCBs.

- #1 Sleeper bonds the frog to both wing rails
- #2 Sleeper bonds the 2 switchrails to each of the stock rails
- #3 and #4 Sleepers are soldered to each stock rail, and provide a guide for the point slide bar and therefore extend to one side, and form a location for the switch stand.

The ends of the wing rails are isolated from the switch rails already so a soldered joint is not needed. They should be curved and held to gauge simply by sliding a small section of wood between sleepers and use epoxy. (Note – Epoxy does not adhere to the Delrin plastic used on the track). The ends of sleepers must be trimmed as they come together near the frog.

On assembly the ends of the frog rails are placed side by side and

possibly brought a little closer by filing the rail flat bottoms.

So far gauge has looked after itself, because it is set by the flexi track moulding, but the triangular frog must be smooth and in gauge when soldered in position. Check this with the NMRA track gauges between the extreme point and each stock rail. After soldering place, adjustment by filing can be done. See Diagram 'C'.

For stock rail seating (to receive the switch rails) they should be held firmly and filed on the inside edge to allow the switch rails to bed. The latter also need to be filed with a longish taper to a thin blade. For switch rails, I use code 40 strip (.020" thick). It does not have a flat bottom and is flexible. It is soldered to #2 PCB sleeper with a small piece of copper wire in place to raise the rail to code 55 height. These two rails are held and moved by the slide bar at the blade ends, and connected to a nickel silver wire pivot as in Diagram 'D' – Careful soldering! These blades must be filed to a thin section so that they blend with the filed seating on the stock rails.

With preparation complete on the undersides, the track should be glued to the balsa base, using the original pin holes but without the pattern. Evostick contact glue is suitable. Thin polythene strips may be used to expedite the correct gluing position. Withdraw the polythene when all is correctly lined up! Don't forget also the 4 PCB sleepers. Apply even pressure over the complete point to make the final bond.

Wing rails should now be made from code 55. Each rail must be curved to match its partner stock rail. File a nick in the rail base at the point of the bend into the wing, parallel to the triangular frog. The gap here is .64mm (.025") for both wings. The wing rails should be held in place, in gauge, and soldered to the PCB sleeper and the frog. Solder the PCB to the stock rails.

The ends of the wing rails may be held to a thin ply sleeper, slipped in from one side (remove plastic sleeper moulding and use epoxy to adhere the rail ends).

The slide bar should be made from thin paxolin or PCB with the copper stripped off and fitted between #3 and #4 PCB sleepers. The slide bar is shown in Diagram 'E'.

The slide bar can be operated by several different methods and this can be left to the builder to decide according to their preferred method. I use .010" model aircraft control wire and pull in both directions via bell cranks.

To provide the correct electrical circuit, cuts should be made as shown in Diagram 'B' using a cutting disc in a minitool.

The final operation is to tackle all those half sleepers! Use a slow setting epoxy and mix in some talc to form a paste. Carefully fill the gaps. Place a strip of thin polythene between the switch rails, press pieces of  $\frac{1}{16}$ " (1.7mm) balsa between each sleeper. The polythene acts as a mould and when the epoxy is cured, can be peeled off.

Rex Nichamin



Rex has also provided the following list of tools and materials used, in addition to any specifically mentioned in his article:-

1. Motor Tool with cutting discs
2. Soldering Iron 15-25W, Resin cored solder.
3. Small needle files, emery paper, wet and dry paper
4. Junior Hacksaw
5. Small drills and miniature hand chuck
6. Screwdrivers, pliers, Lill pins
7. Two part epoxy resin
8. Contact cement
9. Light bench vice

Rex also offers his support to anyone tackling this task and can help with the supply of various odds and ends that may be needed. Please feel free to contact Rex if you are interested in building your own pointwork.

### ***New to You***

#### **Laser Cut Baseboards. (Neil Lancaster)**

Whilst at the Warley Show this year I discovered a manufacturer offering Laser Cut Baseboards. The range offered by Grange and Hodder come in various sizes and configurations (see website [www.graingeandhodder.co.uk](http://www.graingeandhodder.co.uk)) and arrive flat packed to your door. They are made out of 6mm exterior ply and when assembled have a 100mm depth to accommodate Tortoise point motors. They also come pre-cut with ply dowels or recessed holes to fit metal patterned makers dowels if preferred. The boards come complete with baseboard tops which fit into the frame like a jig-saw puzzle. As pictures are worth a thousand words, may I

refer you to the above website for photos and additional info?

We gave the show boards a 'a good going over' at Warley and came to the view that they were strong with no twists. Additional stability is given by diagonal cross braces under tension. I came away from the show with a flat pack 900mm x 400m for just over £28.

The board went together a treat. The laser cut joints are exact and you can have a dry run prior to final assembly. I used Gorilla Glue and pins and added metal pattern makers dowels which were a perfect fit in the pre-cut holes.

I took the completed board to our local NMRA meet which showed positive interest from both N and HO scalers alike.

For Christmas (!) I ordered two flat-packed 1200mm x 600m boards which arrived a few days later (to be part of my HO scale modules). Unlike the earlier board the tops came in three pieces. However the design and precision interlocking presented no problem in assembly.

Again the use of metal pattern makers dowels provided precise alignment and I managed to assemble the two boards within three hours.

You have to provide your own legs but I prefer to design my own. I found that the use of timber could put undue pressure on the baseboard sides so I added a couple of wooden blocks to give additional support which worked out very well.

I write this with the usual disclaimer. There are other baseboard manufactures out there but these have worked well for me and could provide a short cut to module building for those who fear baseboard construction. I also think they are reasonably priced and a very good product.

The company also offer control panels, and rotary traverse boards. However, whilst well built, the traverse boards didn't seem to have sufficient lead track length onto the layout in HO, but may work successfully for N. Look at the web site for details and prices of the boards offered.

Hope this is of interest.

Neil Lancaster

### ***Ralph's Ramblings***

As you can see, I've had quite a lot of material sent me for what I had intended to be a 'brief' newsletter before the convention. That thought quickly went by the way. Neil has raised an issue which should provoke considerable discussion at the March Convention. I think there are two other issues that should also be discussed.

Firstly the vexed subject of convention contests; should we have them? Do we need them? What should we do with the accumulated silverware, most of which has been donated by past and present members. The original idea behind holding contests was to try and raise the standard of N Scale modelling across the board. What happened was that most ignored the contests which became the preserve of a few members.

Last year we made an informal decision not to bother with the contests but perhaps there should be a wider discussion before we finally terminate them. What do you think? Please bring your thoughts to Bournemouth.

My second point is the future of this document. Don't panic, I don't want to stop producing it (yet), but I would like your thoughts on layout and content. Are you happy with the current format (2 column A4) or would you rather see a move towards a more magazine style document like the American newsletter (A5 single column)? Both have pros and cons and we have to bear in mind that the bulk of members will be reading this on a screen rather than on paper. Do you want detailed reviews or headline reports?

Again, please give this some thought and bring your ideas to Bournemouth. Of course our Government trained complaints department will also be available at Bournemouth!

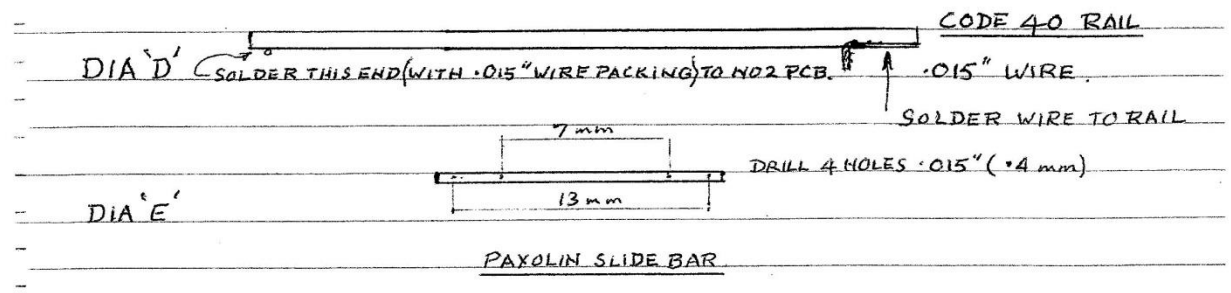
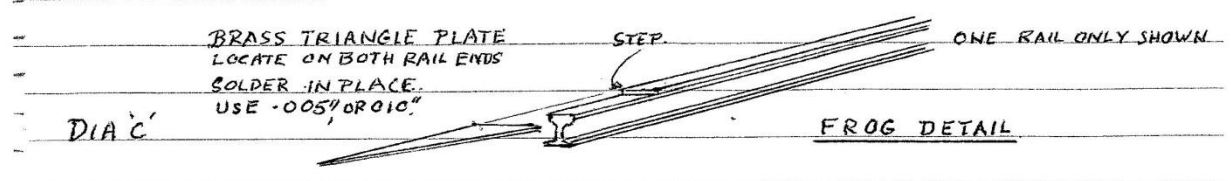
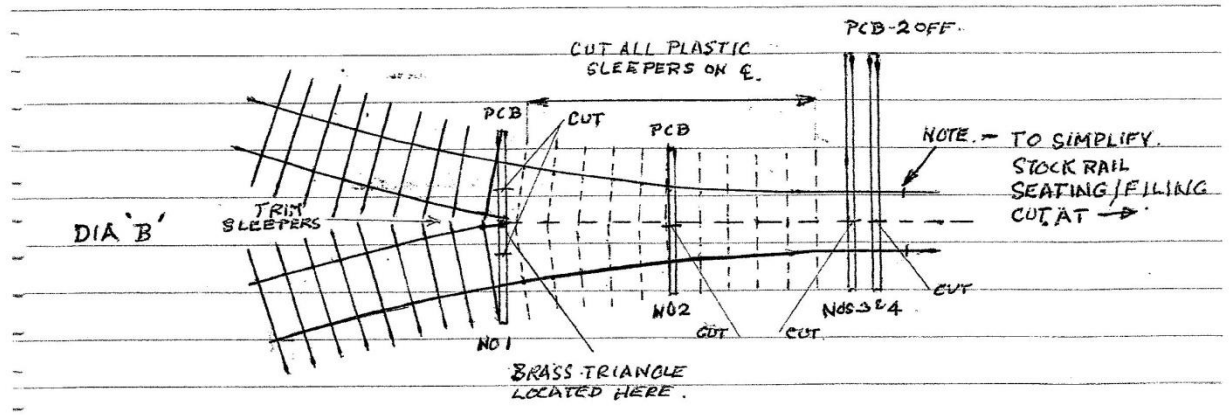
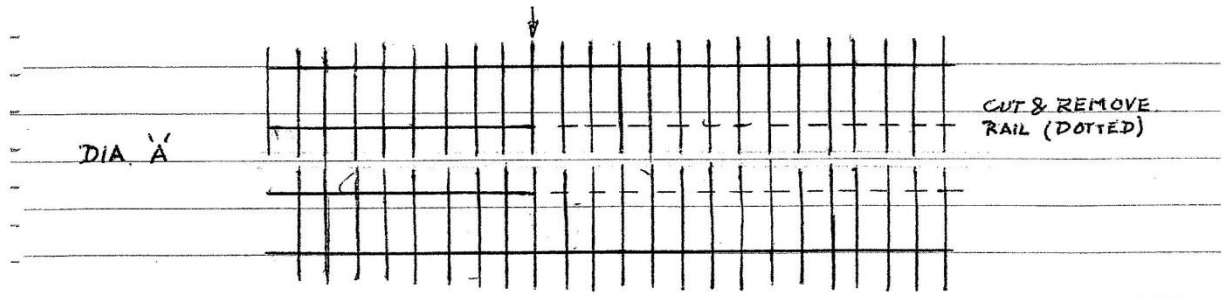
As usual may I appeal to you to keep those articles coming in – unlike the big magazines I don't have filing cabinets bulging with pending material to publish, I rely on an issue to issue supply. My thanks go to all those who sent in material for this issue. Please keep up the good work.

Hope to see you in March at the Trouville

Ralph.

# Diagrams for Rex Nichamin's Point Construction Article

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NOTE ALL THESE DRAWINGS - NOT TO SCALE