

N-Trak UK

June 2015

It's that time again so here is the latest N-Trak UK newsletter. It's not quite so long this time, reflecting perhaps the shortage of material. My thanks go out to all those who have sent me items to use this time and a plea to all those who haven't. Please take the time out to tell us what you're doing, what your local group is doing, what you've seen, done or are planning to do. It all adds to the interest of this wonderful hobby we share.

Christine and I will be visiting the western USA from 21st June to 17th July, but don't expect me to start running UP and BNSF. On the other hand, the Rio Grande had some interesting diversions, and there's always Caboose Hobbies!

I hope to get the next newsletter ready for August this year so get your thinking caps on, warm up the computers and get busy. You can send material by snail mail if you wish or by email to

ralph.snelling@googlemail.com

I look forward to hearing from you.

PS You can see more pictures from our travels in UK, Europe and USA at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/RalphsRRPics>

Department of Whoopsies

The gremlins appear to have had their wicked way with the December issue, particularly the photos for Russ's 'N-Trak by the Sea' article. Actually this particular gremlin is called Ralph, who turned over two photos together so

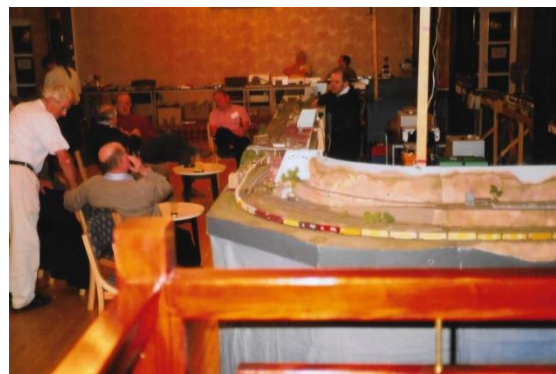
one picture got the wrong caption and one photo was missed altogether. So, here are all three photos from that article with the correct captions.



Steve Bunce's Rock Face Layout at Torquay 1998 (Russ Cook)



Black Diamonds at The Connaught Hotel, 2009



Poole NTrak at The East Anglia 2005 (All Russ Cook)

Home Affairs

Chris White writes concerning his latest project:-

I know you are shouting for material; but I am currently doing a project of my own, but I am afraid it is not US based. It is a close match to Hookhills Viaduct on the Paignton to Kingswear line.

The viaduct started life as a HO Faller set of kits, then overlaid with plasticard random stone, then painted and weathered.

Chris's project may not be American based, but wouldn't that viaduct just look magnificent with a Berkshire hauling a fast freight rolling over it!

Lovely work Chris.



(All photos Chris White)

Allan Dobson writes

American Model Railroad Group (Solent Sub-Division of the NMRA)

has recently has gone for a small name change, although it escapes me at the moment, something with MRC in it. However it is on the website which you will end up on even using the old one. It will always be AMRG as far as I am concerned, as having given birth to it, and getting long in the tooth, and stuck in my ways, hope to be forgiven.

Anyway we had our latest Mini Exhibition / Running Meet (due for a change?) on Saturday 16th May, and from the start it looked like being a disaster with absolutely no one about. It looked like we could have done with a couple more layouts; we were looking a little bit too spacious. However we had a steady trickle of folks through the day and dispensed

loads of teas and coffees, not to mention the home made cakes, so our number 56 wasn't too bad, as at the end of the day we were less than £20 down on our recent average over all take. So we live to look forward to number 57 on the 22nd of August. See You There?

It appears that Allan has also managed to get the AMRG into their local press. Welcome publicity for the hobby?

From our Overseas Correspondent

Hans Sodenkamp, from The Netherlands, has sent this article on updating his Kingstreet Module.

KINGSTREET MODULE

In preparation of the Derby exhibition in October this year I'm updating my Kingstreet module. Since the construction of this N-trak module (2007), there is an undeveloped piece of land. There has always been the intention to build something there later on, but the financial crisis prevented it for a while.

American Model Railroaders on track



THE AMRG GROUP celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2010. In the beginning there were just the two of us, Roger Smith and Alan Cousins (people who met each other after travelling 40-odd miles to the nearest American trainee group in Florida). During the year we visited each other and shared ideas and from there we produced up a further meeting plan and then our members after attending courses by phone, mail or in person at the AMRG meetings in Portsmouth.

The Gosport Globe Sales Executive Required Can You Sell?

The Gosport Globe is looking for someone to sell advertising in our newspaper, helping clients to obtain business growth by reaching thousands of readers every week. We are looking for someone with a track record of successful business to business selling, preferably with advertising sales experience, but this is not essential. The successful candidate will be self motivated, well organised with excellent time management skills, able to communicate at all levels and have a good knowledge of the Gosport area. If this could be you, send an e-mail with your C.V today to admin@gosportglobe.uk telling us why you are the person for the job.

Knowing from the media like its 'hobby' model when introduced as '2000' new model in 1998, we all had our own ideas of what people really do not want to be identified. We decided to put our own work, as a hobby, on a local radio station, St Mary's, Alverstoke, a fairly local but, choosing a station where someone who would be interested in the hobby would be able to hear it. We also have a general public lightweight layout at the same site, but though not a complete one, it is 100% scale in 14 Sds. The train is being built on our own design of planned modules, some can have and own their own modules (which are usually installed by the group) and some together whenever they wish. The layout has really grown and when fully assembled covers well over 600, with trains of up to 25 in length. We also have a general public lightweight layout at the same site, but though not a complete one, it is 100% scale in 14 Sds. The train is being built on our own design of planned modules, some can have and own their own modules (which are usually installed by the group) and some together whenever they wish. The layout has really grown and when fully assembled covers well over 600, with trains of up to 25 in length.

Situations Vacant

Senior Support Workers & Support Workers

Competitive rates of pay. Full Time Part Time & Bank Work available. Locations: Portsmouth/Hants, Gosport, Waterlooville.

Not just working with children in residential or Supported Living services supporting individuals with learning disabilities and complex needs, all of the roles we support range from advice and guidance both at home and in the community. We will also provide central appointments and support the individuals with the activities they engage in (social, leisure, health and wellbeing). A flexible and rewarding career that can be tailored to the successful candidate. This is a unique opportunity to provide support and companionship to people who need it most.

For an application pack, please phone our office on 01329 834 700 or apply online at www.c-i-c.co.uk/careers

Visit us online at www.c-i-c.co.uk/careers

Poetry Corner

Ode To A Cynic

How fortunate we are, we mortal men,
When graced with your opinion,
No finer faculty can we comprehend
That to look to your opinion.

For you are there on any occasion
Free with your candid view,
Alert for the merest reason
Of what seems logical to you.

If your life then is a constant gift
To the failures of men,
You must by now have seen your life
To explain our lack of sense.

Why then, tell us, all of us, all of us,
Your smile a worthless void,
Can it be that these things
A tolerance destroyed?

Bill Slavin

(B&F Kindle book is available from Amazon.co.uk.)

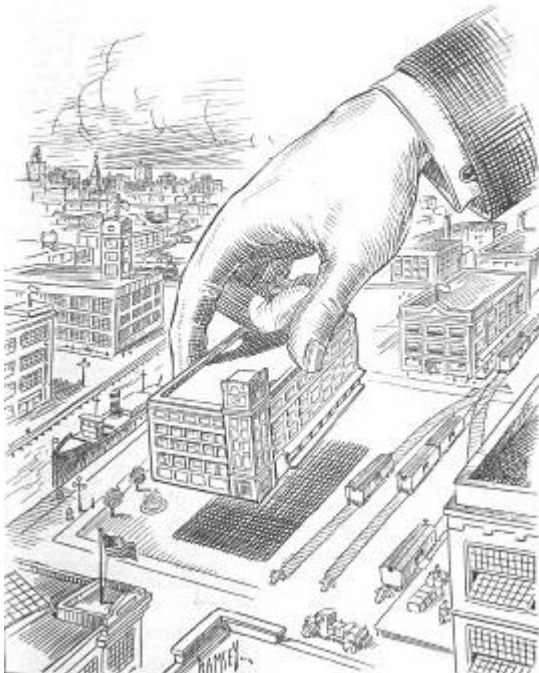


(Corner module on AMRG N layout)

Now there is time for a change. Inspired by a book about changing Chicago, I discovered the buildings of the "Central Manufacturing District." One of these big brick factory buildings would fit well on the undeveloped land.

Planting Time!

PUT YOUR PLANT IN THE CENTRAL MFG. DISTRICT.



After some excavation on the module the construction of this building could start. Because I had some DPM modular parts, I've used them for the ground floor. The DPM modular parts were used to determine the pattern of the columns of the upper floors. The characteristics of the building fit nicely into the surrounding as can be seen in the great example.



Through the large windows you can look inside and so I applied flooring and interior columns. Finally, the building is obviously outdated but still

preserves the character of the surrounding area.



(All pictures Hans Sodenkamp)

At last this part of the module is changed with a new interesting building. So for now the module is updated again.

Hans Sodenkamp

Department of Works

It's about time I owned up to some of the work I've been doing myself. Most of it seems to have revolved around fitting decoders to locos and getting them running afterwards. One thing I discovered, early in my DCC adventure, was that although the Digitrax Zephyr is a good controller, it lacks enough power on the programming track outlet to even change the number on a Bachmann decoder, let alone do anything with a sound decoder. It was obvious that something with more oomph was going to be needed to shift these blighters from their factory state.

I had a conversation with Ted Smale at Sunningwell Command Control and he recommended using a Digitrax PRB-1 programming booster between the base station and the programming track. Magic – now I could fiddle with CVs and the like to my heart's content! That did make me realise though, that

in the absence (still) of a permanent layout, I needed a dedicated test and programming set up to use at home.

So the mark 1 test track came into being with two lengths of track fixed down to a long block of rigid foam, one connected to the base unit and the other via the PRB-1. The only problem was that this has become a case of 'act in haste, repent at leisure' as if I'd thought about what I was doing I'd have come up with a much better plan than the trailing mess of wires and 'black boxes' that the mark 1 has become. The mark 2 is now being designed which will be hollow to enable me to 'bury' the PRB-1 underneath and provide proper connection points so that the test track, PRB-1, Zephyr and their power supplies don't all have to be moved (dropped) in one go.

I may also include storage for the DCC Concepts rolling road components which I find really useful for running in new locos and testing things like sound installations without a mile and a half of track.

So far my most ambitious project has been fitting sound to a Fox Valley Hiawatha 4-4-2 loco. Now actually this isn't as difficult as it may seem, as the tender for this loco has a standard 8-pin DCC plug already installed. Originally I just fitted a DCC Concepts Zen Nano decoder; a very neat little decoder but well capable of handling almost any N Scale loco as well as many HO beasts. Anyway while I was 'installing' the Zen (plugging it in) I noticed that the base of the tender had been moulded and drilled to take a speaker.

My brain now went into a dangerous place; could I put a sound decoder and speaker in the tender and listen as the

little loco roared around with its Hiawatha consist? It seemed likely but was a suitable decoder available? It was! The Digitrax SDXN136PS has the relevant 8 pin plug, a pre-wired 10mm x 18mm oval speaker and offers two different steam sound schemes (as well as 6 diesel schemes). Neither of the steam schemes was an exact match for the Hiawatha but what the heck. I'd read somewhere that speakers needed enclosures so one was fabricated from some plasticard to fit the moulded location in the Fox Valley tender chassis, the speaker mounted and the unit plugged in – low and behold – noise!

After some hesitant fiddling with the CV settings, it began to sound like a steam loco but I was also beginning to realise just how inconvenient trying to adjust CVs with my DT402 handset was. That led to another conversation with Ted and the purchase of a RR-CirKits 'LocoBuffer', a neat little 'black box' (another one and its actually grey), that plugs into the Loconet socket on the Zephyr at one end and a USB socket on my laptop at the other. The JMRI Decoder Pro software was downloaded and installed and – it all worked! At last I could adjust CVs in a reasonably comfortable manner, keep a permanent record of settings, should the decoder ever have to be replaced, and all from a relatively easy, intuitive interface. Will there be no stopping me – watch this space?

I can't actually finish this item without paying tribute to, and thanking, Bernie Wood for his help and guidance through some of the darker spots of DCC and into the great bright hinterland of proper train control. Thanks Bernie!

Department of Buying and Selling

Bill Hamilton Turner is having a 'Stock Reduction' Sale. He writes:-

I'm in the process of looking out some items of stock that I don't need anymore.

The items include locos, passenger cars, and freight cars. Having had lots of fun with them, I shall be happy to offer them very cheaply to let someone else enjoy them.

I intend to bring the collection later this year to one of the meets in the UK for sale.

Before I do this, it occurs to me that I might advertise the whole collection as one job lot in this publication; it will be an opportunity for someone, perhaps starting in American N-scale, to get a complete roster for the price of a couple of new, top of the range locos.

Locos:



9 powered + one dummy RDC : 7 DCC + 2 DC (undecorated). £160 as a job lot.

Passenger Cars:



13 cars all ATSF. £25 as a job lot

Freight cars:



13 in original boxes; 6 unboxed; 1 body shell. £15 as a job lot.

All three lots together £175.

Enquiries before 30th June 2015 please to Bill Hamilton-Turner: billht@manx.net or 01624 624063 (away 5th-18th June).

New To You

It's always said, and I think it's a truism, that when you buy tools you should always buy the best, not the cheapest. This could be said of these items. Some of you will already know that my modelling interests extend beyond model railroading, which sees me visit Scalemodel World in November most years. This massive event, organised by the International

Plastic Modellers Society (IPMS), takes over all three halls at the Telford International Centre for a weekend and is well worth the visit even if you're not into plastic model planes.

Last year one of the exhibitors was a Japanese concern called Platz (www.platz-hobby.com). In addition to their normal range of plastic kits and detail parts for the same, they had a range of razor saws for sale.

Now I don't know about you, but getting a clean cut in plastic or soft metal has always given me a headache in the past. Well the charming young Japanese lady who was running the stall was demonstrating these saws. She was able to cut a sliver, less than 1mm thick from a piece of fairly robust plastic rod with no trouble so I stopped to look further. These saws, marketed under the Hyper Cut Saw label, have incredibly thin but strong blades with a rigid back to keep the blade straight. The blades are mounted into a wooden handle which is bound to prevent any risk of splitting. The young lady assured me that the saws were actually made by the same factory that once made swords for Samurai warriors – so they should be tough!

The prices though seemed high, but the young lady was offering some substantial discounts on her remaining stock as she didn't want to have to take any home with her. I paid about £15 - £17 each for the two saws I bought and they really are worth it.



My experience of using them has, so far, been entirely positive; sharp, easy to use, comfortable and the thin blades make fine work easier. Highly recommended.

A Reminder

Neil will soon be sending out the booking forms for next year's N-Trak convention. This will be held at The Trouville Hotel again over the weekend of Friday 4th March to Sunday 6th March 2016. And the price? Would you believe, exactly the same as this year at £109 per person for the weekend.

Please can I implore you all to get your booking forms and money back to Neil as quickly as possible so he doesn't have a lot of stress about whether we'll make the required 35 bookings. Thanks in advance.