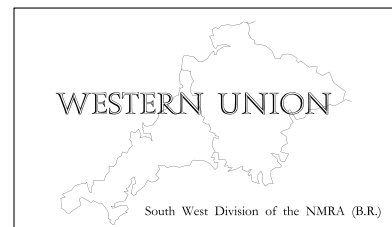


NMRA Western Union Newsletter No3



Hello to all NMRA members in Devon and Cornwall. My printer is working again so we are back with photos.

We start the Autumn meetings on 18th September. I hope to see you there, especially N guagers, Neil is feeling lonely!

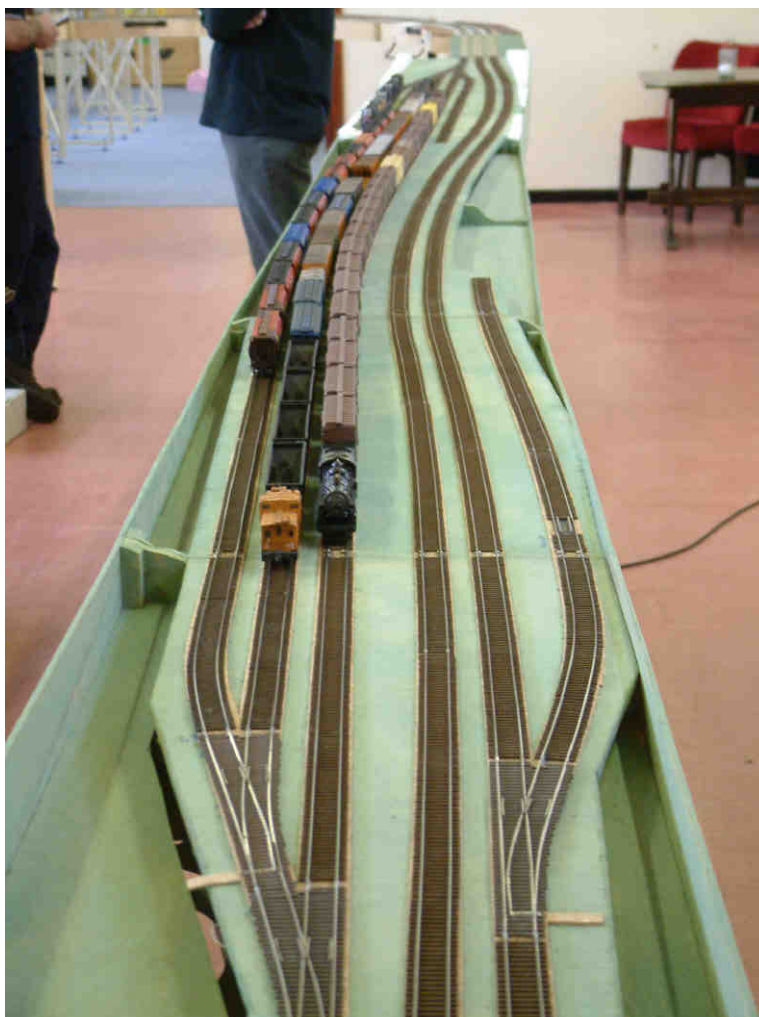
Please note we now have a website, set up by Neil at www.nmrawesternunion.org/

For the rest of this newsletter I'll leave you in the hands of Brian Moore who wishes to put forward some ideas and issues on the modular layouts.

The way ahead...

As the HO modular layout continues to be developed, it is perhaps time to revisit the parameters surrounding its construction, development and, most importantly, its "playability" factor. Upon discussion with regular club members, and following some personal reflection, I offer the following remarks and observations in respect of the layout for your consideration:

It is important to remain aware of the fact that, without the dedication of a few, we would have nothing to run our trains on; this should be the primary reflection of those (including myself)



The N gauge modular layout

The new yard built by Steve

who do NOT involve themselves in the construction and provision of all the modules – their collective input consists of time, cost, transport and ongoing hassle, coupled to the reality that they arrive first with their combined (and previously packed) kit and boards, unload it and set it all up (usual time two hours), stay the whole day (well, they have to), pack up and leave last. They also devote a lot of time between meets in construction, for your and my enjoyment once a month. Thank you Mike, Steve and Rob.

As is known, those most actively and regularly participating in the operation of the layout have elected to go fully down the Lenz DCC route of control – Mike and

The creation of real operations (think about it: assemble then drive a pleasingly long train from storage, circuit the layout, enter yard 1, switching/drop off/add on, reverse the train direction, carry on to yard 2 for possible repetition, change locos, possibly add/drop off helpers, and finally return to storage) will provide a whole new vista for fun and challenge, and the freedom offered by DCC will continue to add to the “playability” factor of the layout. To control all of this, the possibility of a Dispatcher is then invoked, and Mike has already given this some consideration; if operational signalling is added, then the need for such a post is even more necessary. Remember – this is surely the way to really run a railway – the proper “highball” factor.



A coal train with two SD90MACs on the head end passes a SD70 pushing a wood chip train, the head end of which can be seen on the other side of the layout

Steve continue to develop the wonderful operational facilities allowed by DCC on their modules, including the provision of point control. Some of us also have DCC at home, and the combined club membership can now offer scores of DCC-equipped locomotives (many with sound) to run on the layout. Although the DCC decision is permanent, the layout remains capable of hosting “traditional” 12-volt DC trains, should this be required.

The relative operational limitations of the present configuration (two main lines, one large yard, one smaller yard and station, plus a helper neck) have led Steve and Mike to plan for the missing necessity – the hidden storage yard. Although we all enjoy running our trains on many a continuous circuit (and long may it be possible), several of the club members have been discussing the opportunities for more prototypical train operation. The limitations invoked by a “lack of the rest of the world” to run trains to and from, are being challenged by Steve and Mike’s plan for a 4-track storage facility of 14-16 feet, to be placed behind Steve’s boards and fed from a lead track at one end of his yard. Excellent. Thanks, lads.

Operational WHAT??

As the hidden storage yard idea becomes a possible reality, it is perhaps timely to reflect upon the suggestion of a few informal club rules on, for want of a better phrase, “operational etiquette”. I will now tentatively throw in a few notions of my own for your consideration, which attempt to provide a template for making best use of the developing HO modular layout:

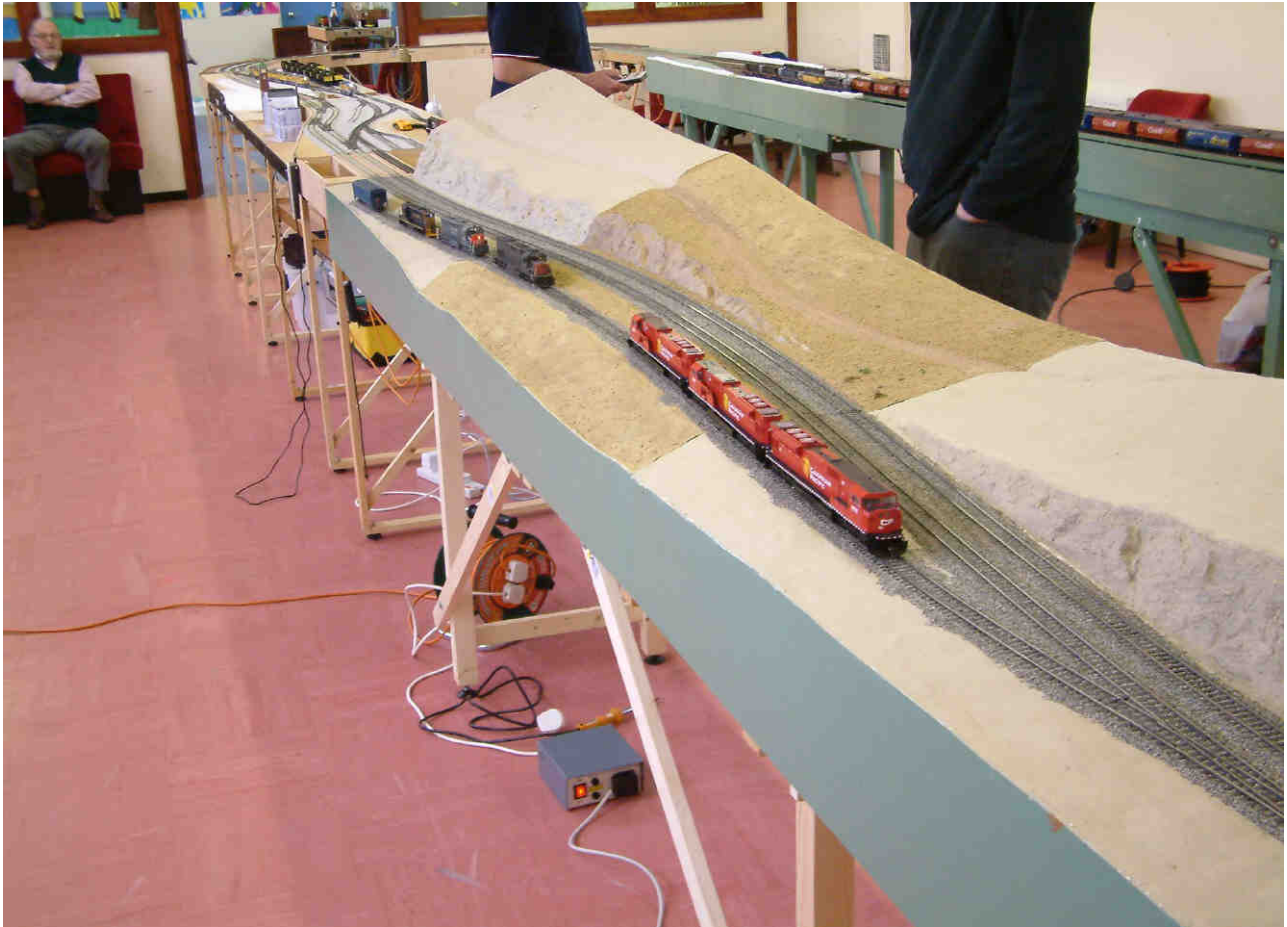
- Prior to placing your train onto the layout, *request permission to do this from those already active and operating*, as presently there are only three potential sidings and they may be about to be used by someone else.
- Once the hidden storage sidings are built and operational, always assemble a train there, and not on visible portions of the layout.
- If you are running continuous circuits, always remain in command and in sight of your train. This will prevent the potential frustration of

others who wish to temporarily stop main line operation so that switching can take place.^o

duplication and the problems created thereby. Perhaps some form of whiteboard could be devised for this purpose.

- If you are not running the train any more, avoid simply leaving it in one of the spare yard sidings unattended for extended periods, especially if others are there - they may wish to either run their own trains or use that particular yard siding for operations. *If your train remains there for a time, it blocks others.*
- In the afternoon, perhaps from 2pm onwards,

I know some of the above may be disagreed with, and this is why we do ask for your comments – it's your chance to respond. All opinions are welcome, as long as they and any criticism are offered positively. I, for one, will not countenance any s***-stirring - if you can't say it in front of everyone in our Hilltop Club, then you can keep your comments to yourself, thank you.



Three old modules have now returned to use with new owner, Rob

interested members may wish to concentrate on developing "operations", with most train movements being either booked or planned, and possibly controlled by some sort of dispatching. In any event, once the storage facility is expanded, it is surely essential that some form of basic running rules be created, using the principles outlined above.

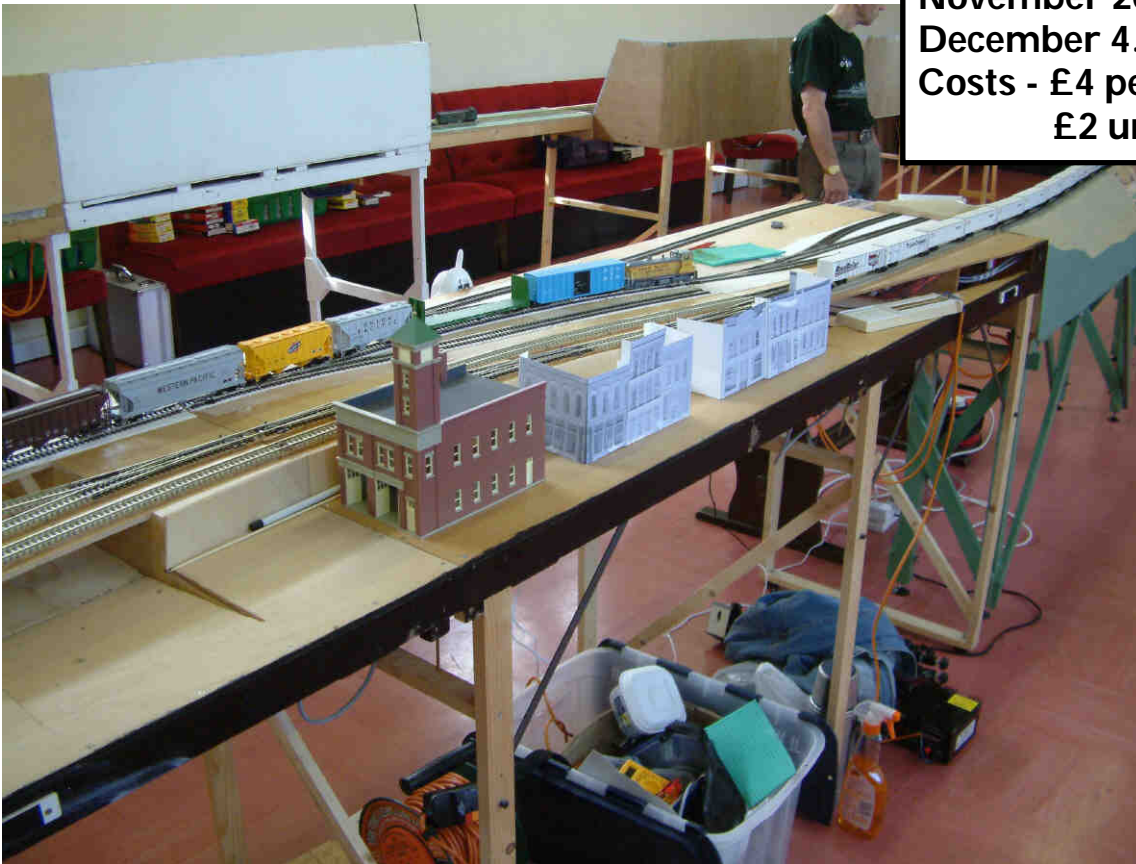
- Due to the ongoing expansion of decoder-equipped locomotives, it is timely to consider some potential guidelines for the allocation of locomotive numbers and particularly those to be allocated to MUs to avoid number

My understanding is that *our club is open to all who are interested in North American model railroading* (we couldn't survive, otherwise – there would be no club at all), and who will keep to our mutually agreed rules. And yes – some of what I've written is perhaps unfortunately redolent of school, but as we all participate in this group for the purpose of enjoying our trains and hopefully developing our personal and mutual interests, it is, in my view, imperative that we give at least some consideration to co-ordinating the way ahead.

Comments appreciated – really.

Brian Moore

Meetings for 2004 are:
September 18,
October 16,
November 20,
December 4.
Costs - £4 per person
£2 under 16's



Part of my module, with switching taking place in the yard

Other layouts sometimes attend, and if you have one you would like to bring please contact me to ensure there is space.
 For those who bring boards for the HO modular layout. If you cannot bring your boards can you please let me know with as much notice as possible so we can work out what others need to bring.

Directions to Hilltop:

If traveling from Tavistock take the turn off after the Crownhill flyover, go through the shops, keep in the lefthand lane over the flyover, taking the left which turns you back towards Tavistock. Keep left off the main road:-

If traveling from the A38 turn off at the junction for Tavistock and follow the Tavistock route around the roundabout. Take the left immediately after passing under the next flyover:-

Take the right lane onto the roundabout, take the second exit onto Budshead Road. At the next roundabout turn right on to Tamerton Foliot Road, follow this road down to Tamerton Foliot up into the village on Fore Street. Go straight across all the mini roundabouts, when you reach the top of the hill follow the road to the left, then turn right into Linton Close. The community centre is right in front of you on the leftside of the road. We use the large room immediately left after entering the building.

Contact- Mike Ruby, 17 Coombe Way, St. Budeaux, Plymouth, PL5 2HA. Tel 01752 369068 E-mail mikerub@supanet.com

