



# Newsletter – APRIL 2026

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## *Chairman's Message – April 2026*

By Mark Peddle

Dear Model Train Enthusiasts,

It's hard to believe that we have already had our first two swap meets of the year come and go—it feels like just the other day we were planning the annual calendar!

On the topic of events, EMRIG attended the Noord-Transvaalse Model Treinklub Swap Meet held at the Voortrekker Monument on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend, but I've heard it was a great success. It was fantastic that our club had the opportunity to once again showcase our modular layout and run some trains.

The Pretoria Model Train Club then hosted its Swap Meet on 28<sup>th</sup> March, which was apparently also well supported. Our club did not take modules to this event, as we were preparing for our first club run at Benoni Junior School, scheduled from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 5<sup>th</sup> April.

Excitement was high as we began setting up our layout at the school on Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> March. The setup started around 11:00, and by 13:00 everything was connected. We spent the afternoon aligning tracks and running tests to ensure everything was ready for Saturday's official run. I'm pleased to report that Saturday

went very well, and we even had time to enjoy a social braai to round off a successful day.



During that event, we also had the pleasure of presenting John Burkhardt with his Honorary Member Jacket and Club Shirt—he was clearly very proud, as you can see in the photo!

Please keep an eye out for upcoming dates, as we would love as many members as possible to be part of this journey. Even better, feel free to bring a friend or two along, to share in the enjoyment.

Remember to stay up to date via our monthly newsletter and Facebook page for upcoming activities.

That's all for now. Until next time — keep your trains running!

Warm regards,

*Mark Peddle*

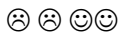
*Chairman*



## **Other Club News**

By Brian Dawson (Newsletter Editor)

***We have NO new members to announce or introduce (or even to re-name!) this month.....***



### ***Club “Dri-Mac” Jackets, and Shirts***

The club’s order of “Dri-Mac” type jackets has arrived, and those that had ordered and paid for them, and were in attendance at the setting up and initial running on the club layout at Benoni Junior School, have already received theirs. The jackets (nice warm ones!!) with hoods are the same bright blue colour as our new shirts, with the embroidered club logo on the left breast, and look great.

If you have not yet ordered one, and are an EMRIG club member in good standing, it’s probably a good idea to order one now before winter arrives. They’re available at R300,00. Contact Mark to place your order.



*Our Chairman modelling the new club jacket, while JohnB’s shirt and his jacket (the jacket presented to him on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March) have “Honorary Member” added to the logo*

Shirts, too, are also available. If you’re not so happy with the faded colouration of your very old shirt, or if you’ve somehow messed up your new one, and need to replace it, or don’t even have one, again, speak to Mark. He will confirm availability and current price.

### ***Swap Meets Feedback and Schedule, and Toy Fair etc. Dates***

The PMT Swap Meet was held on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March, in the John Vorster Technical High School hall in Pretoria. As Mark has said, EMRIG was not represented there this time... we were busy doing our own club thing in Benoni at the time of this swap meet.



But according to the feedback I've received from one of the regular traders there, things started off slowly, but picked up and it was pretty busy particularly between 09h30 and about 10h30. There seemed to be fewer traders than usual, but their main "regulars" (Jabaville, Craig's Models, Tish Goodenough, Len Swanepoel, Marcus Kruger, Tony Den, Neil Plumbly, etc.) were all there.

PMT had a small portable layout, owned by one of the club members, there on display. And they also routinely have delicious pancakes and boerie rolls on sale, as well as tea / coffee / cold drinks, with the sale of these items (the pancakes are baked and the boeries braaied by club members and/or their spouses) raising funds for the club. (Their traders [and exhibitors] are provided with a voucher for a complimentary cup of tea / coffee – and of course you then just HAVE to buy yourself a pancake or two to go with it ☺ !!)

There are no Swap Meets planned in Gauteng for the month of April. The next Swap Meet will be the one hosted by EMRIG, at the end of May (so an opportunity to save up for a couple of months, then! ☺ ).

Here is the **Swap Meets calendar for the remainder of 2026**, for all those Swap Meets that we know about. If any additional Swap Meets are arranged and added (there *might* be another NTMTK one), the schedule will be amended.

May	30/5/2026	EMRIG	Northmead Mall (*)	Benoni
June	27/6/2026	PMT	John Vorster Technical High School	Pretoria
August	28/8/2026	EMRIG	Northmead Mall (*)	Benoni
<i>(This ↑ date might need to change, if we are invited to be part of The Hobby Show again!!)</i>				
October	3/10/2026	PMT	John Vorster Technical High School	Pretoria
November	28/11/2026	EMRIG	Northmead Mall (*)	Benoni
December	12/12/2026	PMT	John Vorster Technical High School	Pretoria

*(\*) = intending to have the EMRIG portable layout set up and running at these events*

*(Other \* info will be added once the Committee has investigated and decided in this regard...)*

### **Richie's Toy Fair**

The first **Richie's Toy Fair** for the year took place on **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March**. We didn't have our layout there on display, having been set up at the NTMTK Swap Meet just the previous weekend. There was apparently no model train layout on display there this time. But we'll be back there with ours for the next Fair!!

Feedback that I've received is that it wasn't quite as big a Fair as some of the previous ones, but was still a worthwhile event. As usual, there were mostly cars and other "toys" on sale, with some of the "collectables" traders doing very well, although there did seem to be a few more model train items for sale from traders who are not traditionally model train sellers, an interesting development...

The next two Richie's Toy Fairs this year will take place on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July and Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November.

### ***Other relevant model train dates....***

The **Transportation Fair** will be held on **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2026**. (See advert later in the newsletter)

The **Great Model Train Expo 2026** will take place on the weekend **24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> October 2026**. Please note that **this is a week earlier** than was originally announced! (Again, see advert later in the newsletter)

The annual **CSME Engineering Fair**, with all its superb live steam action and renowned radio-controlled trucks, will be taking place on the weekend 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September. Confirmed!!

### ***Scheduled EMRIG Layout Set-ups And Future Activities***

We currently (first week of April!) have our layout set up in the hall at Benoni Junior School once again, through the good grace of the school's principal!, for which we are very grateful.

We set up there on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March, with all the contributing members' modules being made available on the day so that the layout could be fully assembled, and we even had a train or two running by mid-afternoon (hence our not having a layout on display at the PMT Swap Meet).

The layout this time consists of 28 straight modules (Colin's x2, Richard's x4, Terrence's x4, Kobus' x4, Niel's x8, Brian's x4, and James' x2), the 5x regular corners and the inverse curve, *and a bridge module!!* Running days on the layout are/were (depends on when you read this!) scheduled as Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March, then Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup>, Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> (the Good Friday public holiday), Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April, with taking down of the layout scheduled for the Sunday afternoon. Intended attendance, from the poll put up by Niel, looked to be anything between 3 and 9 members, on the different days.

Once again it is/was an "expanded" layout, affected by the non-availability of all of Ralph's various modules, with him being away in New Zealand during this period, but with the surprise inclusion of a few other modules we didn't know about! Ralph, we're missing your sidings, pal!! (and the attraction of your other modules, of course!). We definitely need more "parking space" on the layout..... (just saying, Kallie!)

We did, however, have the station building and pedestrian bridge donated by Ralph, which he had thoughtfully left with Brian for safekeeping while he was away, along with a bit of additional platform facility and a bunch of other random buildings and vehicles provided by Brian.





*Some pics of the layout at Benoni Junior School, March/April 2026*

Then the next time we'll have our layout set up again will be at our Swap Meet at the end (30<sup>th</sup>) of May.

And, as we've indicated before, and are looking forward to, we'll be participating at both the **Transportation Fair** in August and the **Great Model Train Expo** in October. (Note the changed date for TGMTE, however! Now 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> October.)

With **The Hobby Show** now to be held at the end of August this year, on the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>, at the Heartfelt Arena in Pretoria, and us hoping to be invited back there again, free space permitting, this could then necessitate us changing our August Swap Meet date, as we somehow can't be in two places at the same time...

### ***Brief Mini-modules Updates***

The first **bridge module** has now made its appearance, at the layout set up at the school!! Yip – Niel got on with laying track on his previously-assembled "sample" bridge module, and has been the first to provide us

with a functional bridge module (I *seriously* thought it was gonna be Ralph!). Okay – Niel’s is still a little short of actual bridge superstructure and scenery and stuff, but that will no doubt come in time... But at least we do now have a functioning “bridge” module for inclusion in our expanded layouts (and maybe even in a short-form layout, at our next swap meet, Niel, by way of demonstration and promotion?).



*We have a bridge module!! Thanks, Niel!*

Terrence got on really quickly with his most recently-acquired two additional straights, and his newest modules are also included in the layout set up at the school. Seems he didn’t need that extra pastorage for his cattle after all, but, in keeping with his agricultural theme, has instead built a multi-paddock stock yard, where cattle, sheep and pigs are waiting, ready to be loaded onto trains.

A really helpful feature of his two newest modules is that he has now included a “reverse crossover” between the two mainlines, complementing the crossover on his pair of cattle pasture modules, so that it is now theoretically possible to cross over, from one line to the other, and then cross back again (like we were able to do with Ralph’s Hyena Drift modules at The Hobby Show). Positioning of his two module-pairs within the layout will now become strategically important, for this function to be useful from an operational perspective (it was not really feasible in the current layout, given the relative positions of the module sets).



*Terrence's new stock yard modules*

Kallie was away from home for nearly three months, much of it stuck down in Cape Town due to Mia's illness and recovery period there, while his assembled modules and an un-built kit were sitting back in Benoni. But Kallie and Mia are now back home at last (glad to hear and to see that you are now so much better, Mia!!), and Kallie is reunited with his modules, and itching to get back working on them, despite all the catch-up he first needs to do at home, having been away for so long. So his 4x module set is still a "work in progress", but it seems he's made some good progress with three of the four of them (with #4 still needing to be assembled). We're looking forward to seeing them included in the layout soon, Kallie!

A really big surprise, at the school layout, was to discover that James had meanwhile bought another two modules (in addition to the original one he and Robyn had acquired, but not yet developed)! These newest two have been assembled, with track laid, but are currently devoid of any long-term scenery. But we made a "temporary" plan! ☺ Watch this space to see what happens there....



*James' modules (L), site temporarily under construction, and Niel's wide ones (R) with a few arb buildings*



And then Niel has laid track (very different-looking Peco track, with *concrete* sleepers!) on his two “wider than usual” modules. These too were included in the school layout.

I haven’t heard anything from Ash recently, but I’m wondering if he has been able to make any progress with his two modules as yet? Likewise, I haven’t had any feedback from two other guys who presently are building bridge modules. Ralph’s bridge feedback is, however, provided through an article below.

Niel still has module kits in stock, plenty of straight modules, some regular curves, and a further inverse curve (the one that the club hasn’t bought from him yet!!).

So if you already have some and are looking for additional modules, or are perhaps just thinking about buying your first one or two, to make your signature contribution to the club’s layout, they’re available now! Just give Niel a call!! And then you can just read some of the “how I built my ... modules” articles in the back copies of this newsletter, in lieu of the assembly manual that Niel doesn’t currently have in stock 😊😊.

### ***EMRIG Newsletter “Index” Available and on the Club Website***

An “Index” (actually a listing of content by month, and by article title / author) has been compiled, covering the period February 2017 to December 2023 (the Index will soon [= *soon as I have time!*] be expanded to include 2024 and 2025 as well). This is available as a PDF document if anyone wants a copy of it. You can just email me your request at [editor@emrig.co.za](mailto:editor@emrig.co.za). It is also available on the club website, under the Newsletter section, right at the top, for ease of reference.

### ***Club Communications Media (our routine monthly reminder)***

These are our Newsletter, our Website, our Whatsapp Group, and our Facebook page, and occasional general Email correspondence...

The club’s **Website** address is [www.emrig.co.za](http://www.emrig.co.za).

The **Newsletter** is uploaded to the club’s website each month, and a link to the website location is posted on the Whatsapp Chatgroup once the latest newsletter is available, and also sent to a number of other “friends of EMRIG”. Members who have requested such, are emailed a copy of the newsletter.

The **Whatsapp Chatgroup** is administered by Niel Wilson. To be added to the group, you need to be an active paid-up member of the club. Send Niel a message at 078-305-5248, and he will add you to the group.

The **Facebook page**... Type “EMRIG” in the searchbox at the top of your Facebook homepage (this assumes you are on Facebook). This will bring up the club’s page. And if you like it, “Like” it, and Follow us!!! 😊

**Emails** are sent to club members when there is something urgent or “special” that you need to be notified about. You need to have been added to our “Google Groups” mailing list... Let Glynn know if you aren’t receiving mails this way, have paid or are paying your subs, and believe you should be receiving mail.

## Letters To The Editor

**Editor's Note:** I received an email in October 2021, which inter alia suggested that we routinely have a **Letters To The Editor** section in this newsletter... 😊😊😊

Come on, guys and girls! Let's hear what you have to say... about the newsletter (what you do and don't find interesting!), about our railroad modelling hobby, about prototypical trains... in fact, anything train- or club-related!!! Send your comments / suggestions / contributions to me by email at [editor@emrig.co.za](mailto:editor@emrig.co.za).

Sorry – no Letters to the Editor this month.... 😞

But we do have those adverts promoting two important up-coming events!!..... 😊😊😊



**REMINDER - BOOKINGS ARE OPEN!**

**TRANSPORTATION FAIR**  
For the Model Enthusiast

**BUY - SELL - DISPLAY**

Any and all Model Transportation items welcome - New and Pre-Loved!

**Don't miss out - Space is Limited!**  
Tables Limited - Book Early! All Scales Welcome!

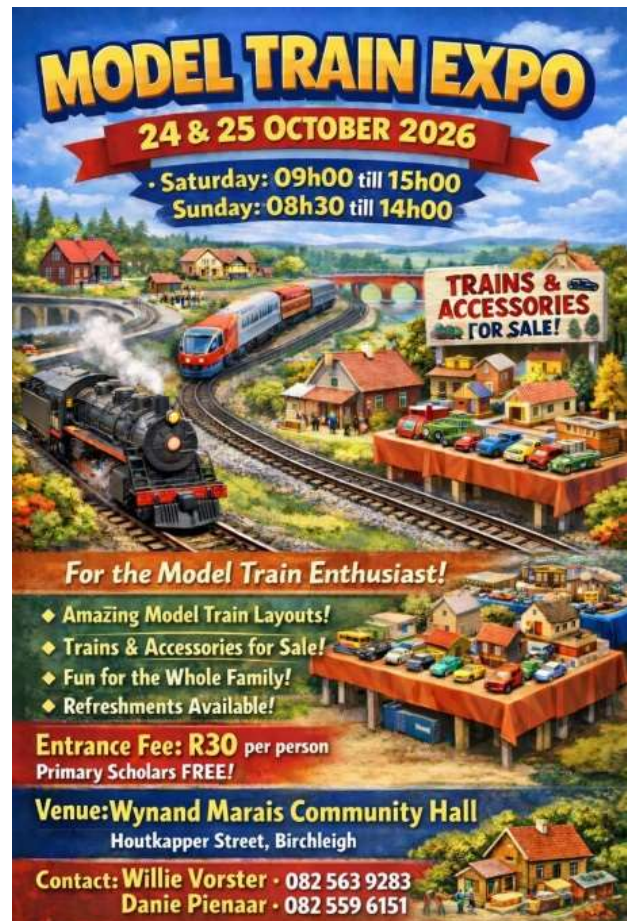
**Table Fee: R80**

**1 AUGUST 2026**

WYNAND MARAIS HALL, Houtkapper Street  
BIRCHLEIGH

**TIME: 09h00 - 14h00**

Hosted as part of the Model Train Expo weekend.



**MODEL TRAIN EXPO**

**24 & 25 OCTOBER 2026**

Saturday: 09h00 till 15h00  
Sunday: 08h30 till 14h00

**TRAINS & ACCESSORIES FOR SALE!**

**For the Model Train Enthusiast!**

- ◆ Amazing Model Train Layouts!
- ◆ Trains & Accessories for Sale!
- ◆ Fun for the Whole Family!
- ◆ Refreshments Available!

**Entrance Fee: R30** per person  
Primary Scholars **FREE!**

**Venue: Wynand Marais Community Hall**  
Houtkapper Street, Birchleigh

**Contact: Willie Vorster - 082 563 9283**  
**Danie Pienaar - 082 559 6151**

*We're looking forward to these two events, Willie and Danie!!!!*

## **Bridging the Gap: Part 3 – Track and Scenery**

By Ralph Davey

Hi everyone.

Last time we looked at the module assembly process for the bridge module scene I am building. This Part 3 covers the track laying and design, and the scenery planning.

### **Bridge supports**

When my son-in-law 3-D printed my four bridge spans, I also asked him to see if he could find pillars for supporting the bridge sections over the river.

Next morning he gave me these... Perfect!



*3D-printed bridge supports.*

While I was testing the alignment I was thinking about what footings to use for the bridge support.

During the morning, while working on the scenery, I received a WhatsApp message from Neil Plumbly, asking if I wanted some footing supports, as he resin-casts them based on the Airfix bridge footings. The timing was perfect. I accepted his offer, and these will be used and will add to the overall realistic look of the bridges. Thank you, Neil.



*Footing supports from Neil*

### **Bridge Placement**

I decided to place the two bridge structures more towards the back of the modules. By using the two separate bridge structures the tracks do not line up with the track-bed guides on the front of the modules. The forward positioning of the spans would also have the bridges right on the outer edge, and could result in them being knocked and damaged. I looked at moving them slightly in, but then saw I would need a

sharp track away and back swing, in a confined space of 200mm. This could cause a rocking motion and derailments as the space available to align the track to the bridge is short. (Also, passengers travelling on my Blue Train would not be happy if their “champers” or G&T was spilled due to the rocking motion. For the okes travelling on the Trans Natal, their reflexes to save a spill of their brandy and coke are much more tuned-in, and no spillage would occur, as the instant the swinging rocking motion started, they would down their drinks.)

I decided to use two standard straight modules as part of the overall bridge design, one placed each side of the bridge modules, adding 500mm each side for the track and scenery. This allowed for a change of track design, with more curves and scenery, moving away from the standard track in front that we have on all the other modules. This also shows that there is no restriction to having other track designs applied.

This use of the two modules that would have been part of my SAR station scene has caused a serious Module Imbalance. I am now two modules short for my personal layout. I could scale down the station design, or I could buy two more replacement modules. Decisions, decisions.....!

### **Scenery Build**

I used my trusted and efficient method for the scenery build – Ralph’s polystyrene and paper towel method.

There is no right or wrong way for scenery and terrain building and additions. It is the modeller’s choice as to the preferred method that works best. Many modellers use strips of cardboard and gauze cloth that has Plaster of Paris, or other grout type material, added. I find this very messy, heavy in weight, and not easy to work with.

My method, being the “Ralph’s styrene and paper towels method”, is simple, easy to apply and not messy. It is extremely light and strong. It comprises the use of PVA wood glue watered down between 60% and 70% water depending on how you see it flowing and setting, polystyrene shaped as needed, and then an overlay of paper towels that are covered in the wood glue prepared.

This is how it is applied... Start by adding the polystyrene landscape for the basic shaping. Shape as needed. Plan the levels and contours, and where roads and rocks will be placed. I use PVA wood glue to fix the polystyrene in place. The pieces and shapes form a natural looking landscape when the paper towel is applied. It is easy to shape and mould as required.



*Polystyrene shaped and placed, ready for covering.*

I added the bank bridge supports, and checked the alignment and height settings at this stage.

I planned on having two roads, one on each side of the river, one a tar road, and the other a sand road. I made provision for these roads in the polystyrene design.



*Bridge side supports added into polystyrene and road placement shaped.*

I added a water outlet and culvert, to be further enhanced as I progressed.

I tested the bridge placement and height settings, and checked level setting for the bridges.



*Bridge level test and height check.*

Once this polystyrene shape and scenery base is dry, I add the paper towel overlay as needed. Apply a coat of the glue mix over the area. Place the sections of paper towel in manageable strips and coat with the glue mix. Overlap the towel strips as you move along. The paper towel forms a good natural look with shapes, slight levels or water-eroded sections. Work slowly, and spread the towel to look as you want it to be. I usually do two, sometimes three layers at most. Use a brush and a flat scraper to add shape and contour.

Extremely easy and no mess! Additional layers or add-on of more shaped styrene is easily accommodated. Once done, let it dry. I let it dry overnight.



*The application of the paper towel overlay in pictures.*



*Bridge and pipe culvert, with paper towel worked in to seal and shape the structures to look realistic.*

### Painting and Base Sealing

I applied a coating of acrylic paint to start sealing off the scenery and to see the design progress. I then applied a clear silicone sealant along the water's edge and over the tab holes on the module base. This is a further seal for the water effect when it is added.

I applied a coat of craft paints to improve the effect. Remember, most of the scene will be covered in ground cover, bush and grass, sand etc., so the base colour covers the wooden base to blend in the ground cover and scenery, and to not have any unpainted wood base showing through.



*Base coat of acrylic paint and clear silicone used to seal holes and riverbank edges, to stop the water effects disappearing when poured.*

I then applied acrylic colours for the scenery and river base colours and river colours. I also added some fixes to the riverbank, which is very easily applied in this method I use.



*Acrylic colours and bank fix applied.*

I decided to apply a paper towel covering to the riverbed as well. It looks better, and provides a "currents and waves" design as a result. The earlier coat of paint was not wasted, as it helps seal the riverbed.



*Paper towel cover applied to the river. Much better!*

### **Tar Road**

I have another tip, in the way I do my tar-type roads. I use a product called poster board that can be bought at PNA or stationery shops.

This is so easy and quick to use. Cut to size, and then the big benefit is applied. Lightly twist and massage the piece. It forms natural surface cracks. This instant and quick product and method results in a road surface that instantly looks like a well-used road with cracks. Additional potholes or edge roughing up is easily applied. I paint the road a grey colour to look more realistic as well, and apply tyre and dirt marks for more visual effects.

The road piece is glued and nailed in place.



*The poster board is cut and the crack effect applied. It is then fixed in place.*

### **Rocks and ground effects**

I added rock structures and bigger rock structures in the river to enhance the visual effect.



*Spread of rocks for scene.*

I painted the riverbed with various shades of green and brown. These will add a depth view when the water effect is applied. I painted the river bank a sand colour. Ground cover and scenic material will be added. This colour application is to cover any gaps.



*Riverbed and banks painted.*

I painted and weathered the two centre supports. These were then glued in place.



*Both sides of the centre supports painted and weathered.*

### **Final design plan**

It was now time for the final design to be adopted. I looked at a few options for how the bridge section will fit into the bigger layout design. On each side of the bridge modules there will be the 500mm straight modules, to allow for the curve to the bridges and the scene to be added.



*Placement of 500mm straight sections either side of the bridge modules.*

I looked at having a lead-in from a station section, and from the current Hyena Drift section I sometimes take to the shows. If the bridge section is taken to a show, its location will need to be carefully planned. So, some future add-ons coming....

I decided to have a standard two-track set-up for the lead-in sections. This is to cater for venue displays. I will probably look to other design in the future for the lead-in from both sides.



*Possible lead-in sections considered.*

I now planned the sequence to complete the scenery and final track and bridge placement.

#### **Track laid**

I laid the track and added the module rail joiner sections. I had prepared the rail joiner sections earlier so that this task was done and out of the way.

I added dropper feeds to the rails, including the rail joiner sections. Lesson learnt previously is to have a feed to all rail sections, and not to rely on the metal rail joiner to complete the connections for the power.

The track has a curved flow on both sides of the bridges. This will allow for a change of scenery, illustrating the option of having a change from the front-of-module track design.



#### **Next time**

The final scenery builds and details will be added. This will be in Part 4, to be provided in due course.

#### **Conclusion**

I hope you enjoyed reading this article. I hope more members will take up the request to get a module section to be included at the club set-up when we visit shows or venues.

## **Depression and (a Different) Epiphany:**

### **Part 3: My BNSF "TBA" Yard... A project for the future one day???**

By Glynn Chamberlain

*Is this just a pipedream, or could it too one day become a reality? Who knows...? Dreaming while on holiday..... ☺ Part 3 of Three (so there's another one to come)*

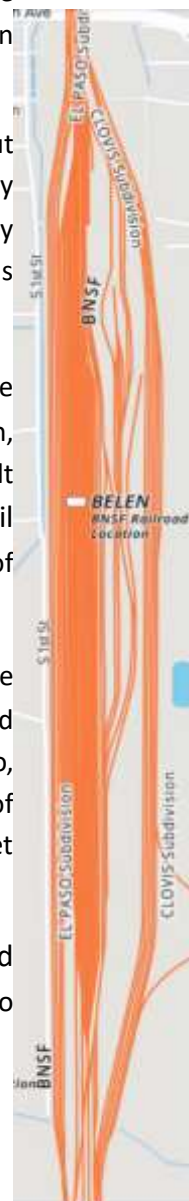
So, we have finally reached the last part of this 3-part series. You have finally gotten to find out which yard I am talking about, and hopefully, some, or most of you, have watched the live feed on YouTube. It will certainly give you an idea of how busy this yard is, both day and night!

Remember, this whole project hinged around a question about whether people at train shows prefer to see amazing scenery and/or watch trains constantly running. Just quickly, my thoughts were that people enjoyed the scenery, but it was running trains that kept people at the layout.

So, moving forward, on the far right is a Google satellite image of Belen yard. However, unless you view it on Google Earth, can zoom in and move around, on the image it is rather difficult to view the details. The other image on the right is the Rail Guide version, and hopefully can provide some better detail of the layout.

Hopefully it is evident on the Rail Guide image that there are two sets of lines running on either side of the mainline, and these lines are actually the 4 refuelling lines each side. So, imagine the mainlines forming a vertical oval... Either side of them is the refuelling, and in the middle would be the yard, yet to be discussed.

So, on the next page, I am going to zoom into the upper left and bottom right of the Google Maps image, to detail the two refuelling pads better.





So, on the left, here is the top left refuelling pad for the Belen yard. Trains facing up will be exiting and heading west to the coast.

I have purposely enlarged the north side to include the BNSF Yard and House Museum identifiers. It is from the BNSF Yard building that the crews come and go after arriving or before departing trains.

The House Museum is where the YouTube live camera is positioned. It is also possible to sit outside this building as a visitor, and watch trains coming and going in person.



On the right is the bottom right refuelling pad. This is where trains heading east or inland towards Chicago are refuelled.

In both of the images detailed above, diesel storage tanks are also visible. However, these are the final delivery storage tanks.

Again, going to the Google Earth image on the first page, in the middle of the image horizontally and on the right, are the main storage tanks. These can be seen in the enlarged image to the right.

What I would also like to highlight is the section in the red rectangle. Again, zooming in and looking around, this is where tank cars bringing in the fuel are positioned, to de-tank to the main storage tanks on ground.

Are you perhaps wondering, like me, how many tanks cars are needed per day?

Fairly recent BNSF statements and reports (from 2023–2024) indicate that the yard's fuelling facilities pump an average of about 750,000 gallons (US gallons) of diesel per day, with peaks exceeding one million gallons on busy days. (1x US gallon = ~3,785 litres)

Rail tank cars (tank cars) used for transporting diesel fuel typically have capacities ranging from about 20,000 to 34,000+ gallons, depending on the car type (e.g., DOT-111 or modern DOT-117 cars). Common practical loaded capacities for fuel service often fall in the 25,000 – 30,000 gallon range per car.

- At 750,000 gallons/day (average):
  - Using ~25,000 gallons per tank car → approximately 30 tank cars per day.
  - Using ~30,000 gallons per tank car → approximately 25 tank cars per day.
- At 1,000,000+ gallons/day (busy days):
  - Using ~25,000 gallons per tank car → approximately 40+ tank cars per day.
  - Using ~30,000 gallons per tank car → approximately 33+ tank cars per day.

This is enough to keep operations “just for fuel” incredibly busy. However, these are rough equivalents, assuming full loads and no losses/spillage. But in practice, BNSF receives bulk fuel deliveries via pipeline,



barge, or rail to its large on-site fuel farms (with multi-million-gallon storage tanks), then dispenses it directly to locomotives via track-side pumps. The Belen yard doesn't literally receive that many tank cars daily, for on-site use.

But... "we" can..... ;-)

What about intermodal operations, and/or motor vehicle handling!? It would be nice to also switch such traffic, but surely it does not have these operations, as what use will they be in the middle of nowhere?

Believe it or not, there are facilities that are able to do this. It is arguably not a big function in this particular yard, but it is there.

Again, looking at the image on the right, this is the north end of the yard with the refuelling pad on the left of the image. If one looks on the right of the image in the red rectangle, there is a yellow car unloading ramp, as well as a Mi-Jack crane! Voila – intermodal traffic!!

Again, if one goes to the YouTube live feed, the car unloading ramp and the Mi-Jack crane are clearly visible as shown below. Please excuse the poor resolution, as this is a screen grab of the YouTube feed.



What other operational features are there available? Well again, floating around the Google satellite image, there is an engine servicing facility as in the image on the right.



In the image to the left, we have a standard engine servicing pit, where trains come in and are quickly inspected for any issues. If there are any, they are then sent to the repair facility as detailed to the right.

Both these facility items could add operational interest to a layout. However, how many model railroaders have sufficient locomotives to facilitate such an endeavour??



servicing or re-positioning, something like this will be invaluable!

Then finally, on the right, we have the good old turntable. With so many locomotives going through Belen and either needing



So now to end...

On the right is a very simple, high level view of the proposed model of Belen Yard. The width of the modules I have targeted is 400mm, specifically for ease of mobility. 600mm would be great, but becomes a bit bulky, as ideally, the length of this layout should be between 4 to 6 meters to allow for loooooong trains that would spark spectators' interest.

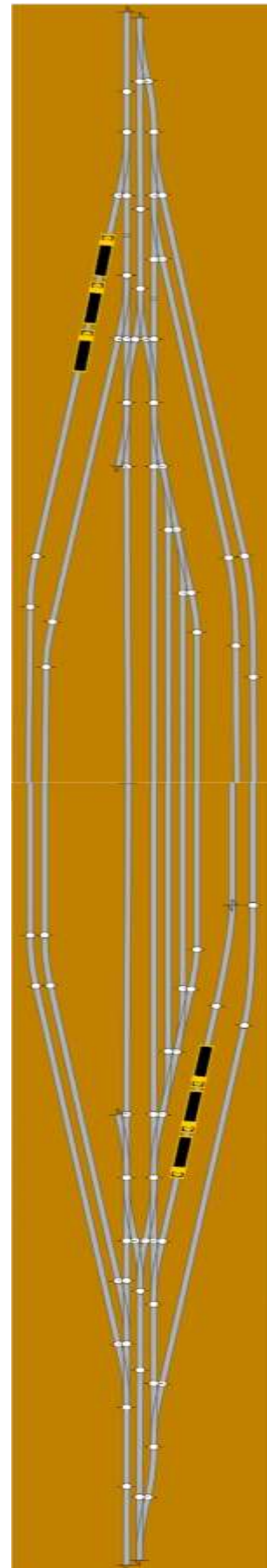
I have kept the refuelling tracks at just 2 for each direction. Again, adding all 4 tracks in either direction would firstly require wider modules, but would also require the modules to be longer to cater for the switches, making the yard bigger and bigger!

From this basic shell, intermodal facilities could be added at top right.

Definitely an engine facility could be added. Possibly the main oil storage tanks (if the modules were wider) together with the respective fuel unloading pads.

Quite honestly, the world is your oyster. However, you now need the trains to do all the running. In comes the subject for the next article, coming to a newsletter to you... Hopefully in next month's edition.

I have kept the last image from last month in on the next page, as I can now detail it a bit further.



So, the image is looking at Belen Yard from North to the South.

The intermodal area is on the middle right of the image. Beyond that, top left is the main fuel storage tanks. Horizontally, between the intermodal and oil tanks, slightly to the right of them is the loco servicing pits and the turntable. And finally, the northern refuelling pads on the lower right.



This is simply a project crying out to be built. Maybe one day... One can only hope 😊

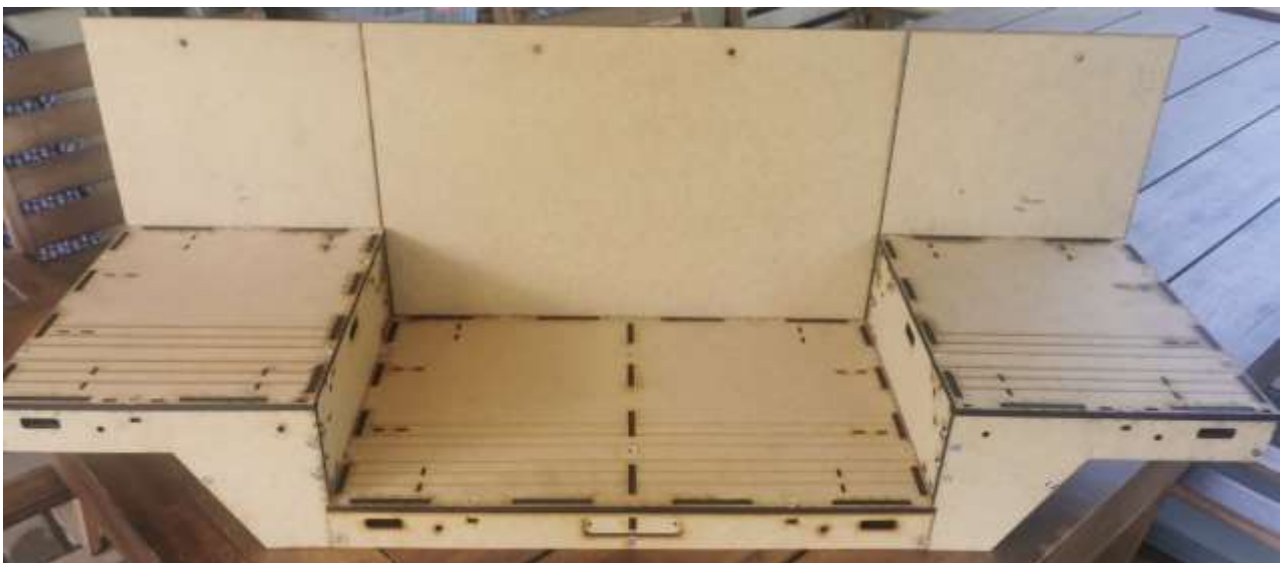
Till next time, happy railroading!

## *Knysna Model Railroaders*

### *Bridge Module Assembly and Detail*

By Brian Messenger

Below is an HO scale bridge module of the type that is to be used in our Knysna Model Railroaders (KMR) group's modular layout. My intention was to put a double-track 3-D printed bridge across the 500mm gap, with water below and some scenery on the sides and back.



*Basic assembled bridge module, before anything else done to it (Photo supplied by Niel Wilson)*

This process was discussed in part, and illustrated, in the article submitted last month (see the March 2026 newsletter).

The following aspects were illustrated last month:

The 3-D printed base girders were laid across the gap.

One side of the 3-D printed bridge was clamped in position and glued to the base girders. The bridge was composed of 18 separate 3-D printed parts, which needed to be glued together. (I used super glue.)

The other side was also glued to the base girders, and then tested using a heavy high speed train to see if the bridge could handle the weight without any sag. The bridge turned out to be very strong indeed.

The top bracing was added and glued in place, which increased the strength and stability of the bridge.

A 3-D printed boathouse and deck were placed in the river beneath the bridge.

Further work done since then follows below.... ↓

As can be seen below, the front fascia of the module has been painted (with the group's name plate added) and a fisherman's shack has been added on the right, below the bridge.



The bridge was then spray-painted with a red oxide colour. Here it is, ready for weathering.



Polystyrene foam was shaped to form the steep bank scenery.



Greenery was added to the foam, and a sand base on the water bed.



Here, the bridge has now been weathered with a very light rust. It took four and a half hours of dry brushing to weather it to my liking.



This next photo shows the top bracing of the weathered bridge giving it the strength that was needed.



Checking the placement of the two buildings below the bridge...



Placement of a small boat at the dock, with an old time train passing above.



Woodland Scenics realistic water in place, with some empty drums in it.



A closer view of the boathouse and the stairway leading up to the boat rental shop on the bank above.



This version was a 3-D test print of the stairway leading up to the small business above, but unfortunately my measurements were wrong. It was 30mm too low... The mistake was easily corrected by printing another one to fit.



A re-printed stairway now at the correct height. Supports will be added under the stairway platforms.



An old (also 3-D printed) standby wharf in the middle for holding loads waiting to be picked up by small boats.



An officer is checking to see if all is okay on the deck.



The water level is now correct, and the three buildings are settled in nicely.



A fisherman has pulled up at the fishing shack, and is waiting for the 'big one' to bite.



I will do a follow-up article on the 3-D printed boathouse and deck. I will also include a few (AI) photos which I used to give me great ideas on detailing and finishing, as well as some fun.

All the best till next time.

*Brian, the HOn3 guy from Knysna, RSA.*

Here's a teaser AI photo below, to be used in the next article....



## **WFG – Building A Layout For TGMTE 2025:**

### **Part 4. Behind the Scenes, and some Operational Hitches**

#### **(The Sawmill build will come later)**

By Brian Dawson

***Editor's Note:** Herman has been too busy at work, of late, to be able to provide me with the technical notes I need in order to write up his scratch-build construction of the sawmill (he'd provide me with notes, but somehow wants me to do the writing...), so that will then be for another edition, when he's not so busy.*

Over the past three months (January – March 2026 Newsletters) we have described the design, track plan, and track laying (Part 1), and the landscaping and scenicking (Parts 2 & 3) of the layout built by the **WestRand Freemo Group** for the November 2025 **Great Model Train Expo**. This fourth article describes some of the other “behind the scenes” stuff that was going on, before and during the Expo. The scratch-building of the sawmill will then be covered sometime in the future, as a final Part 5 article in this series.

We experienced quite a number of different “operational hitches” when we set up and ran the layout for the first time at TGMTE in November last year.

It is relevant to repeat here that we had never, during the construction process, had sufficient space to be able to assemble the whole layout and test it as a full unit, and (due to the space constraints) had had to be satisfied with having either one or the other of the end modules attached to the long sections, each time forming a **U**, and never the complete **O**. Also relevant is that, despite some of us working on the layout three days a week towards the end of the six-month construction period, we still ran out of time, and did not finish everything that we had intended, especially certain critical testing aspects.

This article, then, feels a bit like (rather embarrassingly) spilling the skeletons out of our cupboard, or revealing all the family's dirty laundry, but I feel that it could be helpful (for any others embarking on a similar exercise) to understand that it's a good idea to check out ALL aspects related to the operation of the layout, before setting up on the day and suddenly finding yourself in the public eye...

#### **Transportation and Setting up Time**

The layout was built in Krugersdorp, and consisted of six large portions, four of them around 2,5m long by 0,7m wide, and two of them 2,2m x 1,2m. They needed to be kept separated from each other in transit, in order to avoid damage to them and the fragile scenery on them. One of them, the mountain module, stood around 0,5m high, with easily-damaged protruding trees and buildings glued in place.

In order to save time, we had, on the Thursday ahead of set-up day (the Friday), separated the modules from each other, and wrapped each of them in pallet-wrap (= heavy duty Cling-wrap), to protect them from wind action during transportation, as well as any possible rain we might encounter en route.



*The Mountain module once pallet-wrapped*



*Pallet-wrapped long modules*

To transport them to the TGMTE venue we needed to hire a 3,5m trailer, which Neil collected from the supplier in Randburg at 07h30 on the Friday (just after they opened – so as not to incur an additional day of trailer-hire), and towed the empty trailer out to Krugersdorp. But to tow the loaded trailer all the way to Birchleigh we would need a stronger tow-vehicle, and we “volunteered” Gustav (all the way from Hartebeespoort) to use his bakkie.



*Loaded modules being firmly strapped in place on the trailer, the lake module on the bottom, with two more long modules to still come as a top layer. The mountain module would be loaded on the bakkie.*

Loading the modules on the trailer, and the “taller”, very heavy mountain module on the back of the bakkie, and strapping everything securely, yet well-protected, in place, took a lot longer than anticipated, and the guys desperately needed a cup of coffee once the loading was completed, in order to refresh and prepare for the long journey ahead to Birchleigh. Gustav would be sticking to highways as far as possible (longer than the direct route) to avoid potholes and bumps which could cause damage to the modules, and travelled at speeds well below the 120kph limit in order to reduce wind-drag on the exposed modules. As a result, the modules finally arrived at the venue only around 13h30.

No big problem – we would have all afternoon to set things up, anticipating that the hall would be open until around 17h00 at least, maybe 18h00 if we were lucky... until Willie announced, at 14h20, that the caretaker of the hall would be locking the hall up at 15h00! We had to be out by then!!!! This was a MAJOR issue for us, and we seriously ran out of time, having then to still be doing basic setting up on the Saturday morning, when we should instead have been just “fine-tuning” and getting ready to run trains!

**Lesson learned** – There’s no time for coffee and refreshing once the modules are loaded. Alternatively, we bite the bullet of the additional cost, and hire the trailer on the Thursday, and do the bulk of the loading on Thursday, and just the travelling to the venue earlier on the Friday morning.

## **Legs**

We had decided that, because this layout was primarily for display purposes, with kids needing to be able to see what was happening, we would use shorter 1,0m legs at TGMTE than our customary 1,15m long square steel tubing (25mm x 25mm) legs, used for our normal operational layout. Wolf kindly supplied folded-profile stainless steel legs, all cut to length, but we had realised that these legs did not have the required

25mm x 25mm cross-section, and that, because they were not square, there was too much play when they were inserted into the leg-blocks under each of the modules, and the layout would “rock around the clock” on them. They also were not “height-adjustable” (other than by placing blocks underneath).

What to do???? We could cut some of our 1,15m steel legs shorter... but that would mean that we couldn’t then use them for our regular layouts in future. Neil made a quick alternative plan on the Thursday, by cutting a couple of the square tubing legs into 10cm pieces, crimping both ends of the shorter stainless-steel legs in the vice, and then prising the square 10cm portions onto the squeezed ends of the short legs, to now have a “regular” 25mm x 25mm top to the legs, for insertion into the leg-blocks, and a square base into which to insert the adjusters at the bottom.



*Leg-block (in each corner of each module), and 2x modified (R) vs unmodified (L) legs*

Plan made.... Except that, with everything else going on on the Thursday, we did not have time to check each modified leg in each of the leg-blocks, assuming all was “standard”. Fatal mistake!!... On Friday we loaded all the modified legs, as well as a few spare unmodified ones, on the trailer.

On arrival at the venue, and when starting to set the layout up, we discovered that all of the leg-blocks, particularly those on the new and as yet untried end-modules, were not necessarily 26mm x 26mm, and the newly modified legs did not all fit. As a result, we ended up having to use some of the unmodified legs, fitting very loosely in the leg-blocks, and the layout was accordingly not as stable as we would have liked.

**Lesson learned** – check all the leg-blocks for size beforehand, and that the (shorter, modified) legs all fit properly, long before D-Day. Alternatively, just use the longer regular legs (but this makes it much less easy to view the layout, especially for kids and vertically-challenged adults).

### **Track alignment**

We had very carefully checked the horizontal track alignment during the laying of the track. We had no issues with horizontal track alignment during the Expo. We did, however, have an issue with the vertical

alignment between two of the modules. During the course of the Expo, on the Sunday morning, we found that the right rear module had dropped relative to the mountain module, resulting in a vertical alignment step of around 1 – 1,5mm. It was going to be a bit of a mission to get underneath, loosen the bolts and raise the height of the dropped module, and refasten. And so we just left it.

The Bo-Bo diesels and most rolling stock were able to tolerate this little step, with a bit of speed reduction over the step, but Gustav's beautiful little steamers →, with their tiny front-truck wheels, were not able to, putting an end to Gustav's steam train running on the Sunday.

**Lesson learned** – fasten the modules together properly when setting up (assuming you actually have the time you need!), so that the modules are unlikely to become misaligned. Use dowels in carefully drilled (prior to track-laying) holes, to keep the modules perfectly aligned.



### Point motors

We had intended to have the majority of the points electrically switchable from inside the operating area within the layout. This was, however, not absolutely critical, as many of the points could quite easily be reached from within the operating area. This was NOT the case, however, for the two points at the far end of the logging camp (on the mountain), those at the sawmill, and also the point leading to the grain delivery and loading sidings on the lake module.

Point motors were installed (at the last minute, on the Thursday) for the two logging camp points, although they proved to be problematic in that the power draw for those points was higher than could be provided by the transformer we had. Those points were then operated by hand, by a club member standing outside the layout, whenever required.

We did not make use of the grain silo sidings at all during running, just avoiding the problem at that end of the layout.

*Exposed point motor mounting blocks →*

The mounting blocks for the point motors had all been installed, and some just sat there, unused and unscenicked, looking a bit unsightly. The point motors will all be installed and tested before the layout is next placed on display!



**Lesson learned** – start work on the project earlier! It'll always take much longer than you think!!

## Switching / Shunting

With the layout intentionally designed to accommodate both mainline running AND switching at the various industries, we had intended to do a whole lot of switching of freight cars, bringing them in from the run-around mainlines, and then using the dedicated shunter to switch them to the sidings in the industrial area. We did do some of this, but we could have done a lot more. With often just two, sometimes three of us operating the layout, so that others could have a bit of a break, most of the activity concentrated on keeping trains running around on the mainlines.



*Brian and Herman on duty, posing for Andrew Johnson's photo*

**Lesson learned** – have a schedule drawn up beforehand, with at least four operators on duty at a time (there's not enough of us in the club!), two to manage the mainline trains, one handling the logging train, and another doing the switching using the switcher. Above all, keep trains moving on the layout!!

## Doodlebug

We had intended to have a Doodlebug (a self-propelled railcar commonly configured to carry both passengers and freight) running up and down the branchline between Whitehall Station and the small station on the lake module.

Dave had a Doodlebug, which he had not run for a long time, and which we never tested or ran before the Expo. When we came to run it at TGMTE on the Saturday morning, we found that it ran fine forwards, but just would not run in reverse, for whatever reason! With the branchline being an "up-and-down" line, with no turnaround facility, this meant that we could then not make use of the Doodlebug.



*Examples of Doodlebugs (model on left, old prototype on right)*

Instead, we used the shunter to run freight cars down to the Farmers' Co-op next to the small station on the lake module, but as we had no passenger coaches with us, no passenger traffic between Whitehall and the lake module station was possible.

**Lesson learned** – test (well beforehand) all locos and rolling stock intended to be used for display purposes.

### Shay

We had a similar situation with the Shay locomotive we intended to have running on the logging line, between the logging camp and the sawmill. Dave and Neil both had Shays, which, again, had not been run for a long time, and were not tested beforehand. One of the Shays could not be induced to run at all, and the other kept dropping a driveshaft next to the logging track, and coming to a halt.



*Examples of model Shay locomotives*

Instead of a Shay, we then had to make use of another small industrial shunter we had with us to occasionally run the log-car train between the logging camp and the sawmill.

**Lesson learned** – same as for the Doodlebug! Test all locos, especially those that are not run regularly, before bringing them out in public.

### **Brian's Burlington Northern double-header shorting out the layout**

Brian was very keen to run his favourite BN GP50+GP40-2 doubleheader with a long freight train on the mainline. But every time it was placed on the layout, the layout shorted out. The BN double-header was the obvious culprit. It was subsequently found that the thin wires connecting the two locos (GP50 with motor and GP40-2 dummy with the sound) had rubbed through and were shorting against each other. He then had to resort to using his somewhat less-preferred Santa Fe and Union Pacific locos! ☹



*Brian's favourite Burlington Northern double-header, pictured on another layout*

**Lesson learned** – Brian, regularly check and maintain your locos, properly! Don't just assume they're fine!

### **Club Shirts**

Dave had ordered Golf shirts for each of us, a lovely dark blue shade with a screen-printed WFG logo, which we would wear for the first time at the Expo. But when the shirts arrived, all in good time before the Expo, they were, all of them, WAY too small, despite the correct sizes having been ordered! We could not wear them!! Dave sent them back, and the replacement order had not arrived in time before the Expo, so we were sadly unable to proudly display our club identity as intended (hence Brian wearing his EMRIG shirt while operating the WFG layout!).

**Lesson learned** – yes, we learned our lesson, and the problem has since been resolved!! ☺☺☺

So we know we've got a few things still to sort out, and some more work to do on parts of the Expo layout, but we're presently still taking a break from that layout, as we look at how we can instead use much of that layout (five of the six modules) in putting together another operational layout in the shed that Dave has kindly made available to us! We only have to have the Expo layout sorted out by October.....;-)

Watch this space for future updates.....!!



*Despite a few operational hitches during the Expo, we still had a great deal of fun running our layout!  
Richard, Herman and Gustav doing duty.*



*The pack-up crew on Sunday, in varied attire, about to leave, with the whole trailer now pallet-wrapped!*

## **Gauteng Model Railway History:**

### **4. The Pretoria Model Train Club (Part 1)**

By Terrence Marx and Pierre Jacobson

***Editor's Note:** I'm really grateful to Terrence and Pierre for putting together such a detailed history of PMT. The document submitted by Terrence amounted to 34 pages (11MB), and so I have chosen to split it in half (sort of), with this Part 1 covering the very "early years", and their early activities. Part 2, next month, then, will cover their various layouts, their newsletter, and their public appearances, with an Addendum containing the module specifications they chose to apply.*





## INTRODUCTION

PMT is a model train club, based in Pretoria. We operate model trains in HO scale, DC and DCC, and we do not restrict members to a specific country or era regarding their models.

At the club we try to encourage a general interest in trains, and specifically aim at growing the hobby of model railroading. In keeping with these goals, we try to arrange regular workshops for members, which can be in the form of field visits to some railroad-related facility. Demonstration / presentation type of workshops are also held. Occasionally a hands-on workshop is arranged, usually to maintain our modules and to share skills with others.

Enjoy your visit to our station, and feel free to leave us a note via email or visit us on the web. Our contact details are as follows:

email address: [pretoriamodeltrain@gmail.com](mailto:pretoriamodeltrain@gmail.com)

Website: <https://pretoriamodeltrains.co.za>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/24031836660513/>

It is our sincerest pleasure to present a brief history, and some anecdotes, of the club as they have been recorded in the club's newsletters, the *Signal* and the *Semaphore*, over the years.

### 1995

1995 was an auspicious year for the world, and the greatest event of 1995 was the formation of the **Pretoria Model Train Club** in February 1995!!

The Pretoria Model Train Club was founded in 1995 by a group of modellers: Charles van Rooyen, Terrence Marx, Hans Sturgeon and Pierre Jacobson, who saw the need for an organised *modular* model train club in Pretoria. At that time there was another club in Pretoria at the show grounds, but they were of a permanent (non-modular) nature, and relatively unknown beyond the walls of their building. An article about that club has already appeared earlier in this series.

It was during February 1995 that Terrence Marx placed an advert in the Junk Mail, a local weekly that advertised all kinds of goods and services, indicating that he wanted to start a club...



**Image 1** PMT's Ground Zero advert, as published by Terrence Marx

Terrence recalls as follows: *“I was about to go to work on the Friday (the paper came out Thursdays) when I got a phone call on our landline at home. It was Hans who was calling and we had a long conversation about the topic. He warned me that I can expect a call from Charles about the very topic at some stage. Hans indicated that he had seen the advert in the Junk Mail, and had spoken to Charles about it. At that stage there were several modellers in the Pretoria area who were members of a Johannesburg-based club at KhayaSands Business Park during 1993/1994, called EMRIG (Eastern Model Railways Interest Group). It wasn't long after that that Charles indeed made contact, and I soon met with him at his home in Rayton one Saturday afternoon, and discussed the matter over a 2L coke and a packet of NikNaks. By the time I had left Charles' house, PMT was all but formed already; it was just the paperwork that needed to be completed.”*

It was on a Saturday or two later that the four founders met again at Hans' home also in Rayton (he still stays in the same house, across from the mainline that runs to Witbank) (Charles, too, is still living in his same house today), and we sat down and set up PMT. Pierre had brought EMRIG's constitution and other documents, and those were adopted with a few modifications.

The PMT logo represents a typical South African Railways number plate. At that initial meeting between the founders at Hans' house that Saturday afternoon, the need for a club was confirmed and the decision was made to get started. After some discussions about the name, PMT was chosen. The name was not only



chosen to give the club its identity, but also points to the fact that we are a dual-medium club and wanted initials that were the same in both Afrikaans (Pretoria **M**odel **T**rein klub) and English (Pretoria **M**odel **T**rain Club) languages. The number in the centre of the plate, **1995**, represents the founding year.

From the outset, it was decided that the Club layout/s would be in modular form. A set of standards, based on those used by EMRIG (provided as an Addendum at the end) was adopted, with minor changes for use by PMT's module builders. A significant departure is the option to build elevations, which is not allowed by other clubs.

It was envisaged that PMT wanted to be able to have combined operations with other clubs, so PMT adopted the most salient specs to facilitate this. Another fact which gave PMT a boost was that Charles already had his complete modular layout (based on EMRIG specs) available for club use.

The first committee consisted of:

Chairman: Pierre Jacobson;

Secretary: Hans Sturgeon;

Treasurer: Terrence Marx;

Organiser: Charles van Rooyen

The club newsletters were in the hands of Pierre and Terrence. Charles already had a monster modular layout that he used to take to EMRIG: there were six 30° curves and eight 1.8m x 60cm straight modules. Back then, with the enthusiasm that we had, moving the modules on Terrence's yellow Bantam bakkie was a breeze; today that activity would elicit a lot of groaning. Interestingly, after those modules were retired from PMT, many found their way into Charles' home layout, where they are still performing sterling service today. During the first few years of PMT's existence, the modules were mostly transported by Terrence. In the first year, the modules were kept at Charles' home in Rayton, as they were mostly his. Once more modules came online, they were kept at Terrence's home in Waverley.

We had no idea how big PMT was going to become. By the time a meeting at Koedoespoort over the weekend of 18/19 March 1995 was done, PMT had 19 members and 15 potential members. By the time our newsletter 05/95 came out for July/August of 1995, there were 36 members on the mailing list:- oh, those were the days!

The Club's first "official" outing took place over the weekend of 14 - 17 April 1995 at the Wits Tech, an event arranged by Reef Rails in preparation for the NMRA convention which was to take place later that year at Esselen Park over the weekend of 22 - 25 September. The cost for this event was a whopping R175-00 per person. To put this into context, however, let me contrast that with the price of Peco track that was for sale in the March (?) 1995 newsletter: Flextrack R13-00 per length, turnouts R40 - R50 per turnout, which the club managed to buy from a shop in Durban.

Goodies Hyper in Southgate Mall, through Deon Wellen, approached PMT to set up their layout at the mall for their "Winter Toy Wonderland". Goodies Hyper had at that stage obtained the franchise for Lima trains, and expectation was stirring that maybe some new SAR would be manufactured by the Italian company. Unfortunately, Lima wanted an order for at least 500 pieces before they would pull out the moulds. Needless to say, that dream suffered a slow death, and since then both Lima and the SAR moulds have been consigned to the annals of history.

This happy event (*the Winter Toy Wonderland, not Lima's demise!*) occurred during June/July 1995(?) and Charles' layout was set up outside the shop at one of the entrances. It was there that Terrence found out that Kadees are very magnetic: one of his flatcars fell to the floor and landed squarely on the KD, snapping the head clean off. Terrence recalls this event because John Burkhardt had made the same observation at EMRIG's 2026 AGM.



**Image 2** *Stand back, we know what we're doing! Doing it at the Koedoespoort diesel depot. Martin Drescher (with the pipe) taking notes.*



PMT were lucky enough to acquire the use of the upper floor of the diesel depot at Koedoespoort on several occasions, and this was considered as the club's home base for the year, where we were able to set up our layout for a small fee, which was gladly paid. Martin Drescher was one of the mechanics there who joined up in that period, and club members would often, under supervision and permission, walk through the depot and look at the locomotives which were in for repairs. There was no excuse not to build accurate models when the prototype was a scant few meters away. Martin is still working at the Depot, and is still always available to give prototype advice in that regard.

Pierre was instrumental in arranging the venues for the first year. PMT attended meetings at Hospice and also attended the Oktoberfest at the German School in October, participating in the German festival. Charles supplied the modules, and Hans and Terrence saw that everything was delivered to the venue on time. PMT was lucky enough to be invited to the Pretoria Technical High School in Park Street, Pretoria, over the weekend of 1 - 3 August, an event that had followed on an outing at the Willem Prinsloo Tractor Museum, to which Charles had brought his layout, over the weekend of 22 July 1995.

The move to a more permanent home came quite rapidly. It was when PMT set up their layout at Valhalla Primary School for 18 - 23 December 1995, through the intervention of Robbie Graham, that the biggest change to the club was to occur. The Valhalla layout consisted of 17 x 1.8m modules and a number of curves. PMT received a lot of public members that week after a photo of the club appeared in the *Beeld* newspaper. John Burkhardt set up the Digitrax system "for the first time in South Africa on a large club layout".

It was at that event that Headmaster and Deputy Headmaster, Messrs Jak Wagenaar and Eddie Vigeroux, from the John Vorster Technical High School saw the layout, mostly of the blank plywood variety, and offered PMT permanent residence at their school in Waverley.

Part of the agreement with John Vorster High School was that PMT would exhibit the layout at their annual Open Day for the new Grade 8s, in return for free storage and train running opportunity over the school holidays. PMT was privileged to do this for several years by setting up the layout in the school hall. The permanent layout is still open to the public over weekends, and is sometimes visited when the school hosts sporting events at the premises. If you are at the school hall, you will see a trap door (that weighs about a million tons!) in front of the stage, through which the modules were manhandled to the underground storage.



***Image 3** Johan Voordewind explaining things to youngsters at the John Vorster Open Day. Louis Venter and Johan de Villiers observing.*

By 2001 the club was very active, with members attending in large numbers over the weekends. Newsletter 2001/3 included a list of responsibilities that were applicable for anybody who wished to run a train on the layout. These included:

1. When you take control of the throttle, inspect the whole line that you are going to run on (for instance the "A" line if that's where you are running).
2. Determine how many trains are going to be on the same track that you are going to control.
3. Confirm with all the train owners on the line if all their stock is rail-worthy.
4. The person who has the throttle in their hand is responsible for controlling all the trains on the tracks, and he must keep a constant eye on all the trains.
5. The Controller must strive to keep a constant distance between the trains and ensure that they are evenly separated across the layout.
6. In case of a derailment or obstruction on the tracks, the Controller must not press the STOP button immediately, especially when there are long or fast trains on the line. This over-eager use of the "idiot switch" leads to unnecessary derailments or uncoupling of the cars. Bring the trains slowly to a stop.

7. Remember the train-setup of every train on the line.
8. Communicate continuously with the owners of the trains under your control so that they can look after the safety of their own trains themselves while they are operating on the line.
9. Never assume you are the only person running a train on the line. Always consider the trains of other members while you are in control of the throttle



**Image 4** Charles van Rooyen, one of the founders, with his hand in the eëkie-jar braai fire.



*Image 5 Santa Claus was once a member of PMT (allegedly) and is a Digitrax aficionado.*



*Image 6 Prizegiving winners, circa 1999. L-R:- Alwyn Carstens, Johan Voordewind, Peet Jansen, Jan Coetzer (rear), Albert van Deventer, Bertus Olivier (rear), and Leon vd Linde*



The 2001 program had 22 events planned for the year which included several monthly meetings to be held at the home of Anne Mentz. This also included the normal setting up of the modular layout in the school hall over the holidays. Also planned were two trips on the Friends of the Rail train to Cullinan (25/02) and Heidelberg (25/03). Two swap meets were also planned for 7 April and 6 October. An item that was also mentioned from the beginning of the year was that PMT intended to host its own Hobby Show during February/March 2002.

As far as membership was concerned, PMT's membership stood at a respectable 80 members when the official annual club address list was issued in April 2001.

The club again attended their layout at the Zwartkops Air Force Base for the Gauteng Modeller's meeting which was held over the weekend of 5 May 2001, and also indicated their intention to attend the Hobbisports Expo which was to be held on 19 - 20 May at the John Barrable Hall in Benoni. This last event occurred as a result of the layout being seen at Hobby-X in Johannesburg earlier that year. This event was also attended by EMRIG and the N Gauge Guild as well. The PMT layout was once again a show stopper, judging by the many favourable comments received from the public.

PMT were also invited to set up a layout at the Kolonnade shopping centre in conjunction with FRIENDS OF THE RAIL on 21 July 2001. The usual suspects were in attendance at the centre from 06:00 until 17:00 when the layout was finally taken down. The layout again received a lot of attention.

There was a strong feeling that PMT should host the 2005 NMRA convention and the planned 2002 Hobby Show, which was to be held at John Vorster on the weekend of 2 - 3 March 2002. Over 40 exhibitors had indicated their interest in attending the event. A Show Committee had been appointed to ensure that the event went off as planned. The usual dozen or so events and outings were listed as well as dates for four swap meets for the year. The big outings for PMT in 2002 were the PMT Hobby Show (2 - 3 March 2002), Hobby-X (7 - 10 March 2002), Hobby Sport Expo (18 - 19 May 2002) and the Africa Militaire (18 - 22 September 2002).

A building competition was again held on 14 December 2002 along with the year-end function (which was to take place at the lapa) being held at the hall instead. Prizes were handed out to the winners of the competition. The day also coincided with our swap meet held that same day, where the usual dealers had many items for sale. The Train Parade was held on Saturday 14 December 2002 at 14:00. These events are always popular amongst the club members.



## OTHER

PMT members have had a lot of fun in that hall, and while the club was intended and designed to travel around the area, the acquisition of a permanent space slowly led to the club curtailing its travels. Terrence recalls a running session at John Vorster when Hans brought a few Frateschi locomotives and ran 100 of the SAR ore wagons (those with the yellow arrow), breaking the 69 car record set up in 1997, after which Johan de Villiers promptly upstaged the performance by pulling that same train with a tiny Kerf locomotive. That train took up half the layout which consisted of at least 30 large modules. Terrence and Salie Henrico then combined to run a 125 car double stack train later in the year as well.

PMT had a lot of talented model builders in the club, and they would often exhibit their year's work at the end of the year at the year-end function, a tradition in which the spouses and families of the members are invited for a braai and an awards ceremony, for achievements reached during the past year. Most notable amongst these have been Albert Borgstein, who is still building impressive SAR structures, Lourens Sturgeon, a prolific professional model builder, Alwyn Carstens and Albert van Deventer. PMT has a very strong SAR influence, and this is evident in the modelling that was present on the layout. Several hand-crafted SAR diesel and steam locomotives were regularly seen on the layout, much to the liking of the public, most of whom who could associate with the "old days" of steam in South Africa. Albert especially deserves mention for the fine craftsmanship he extolled in building the first 9Es, and inspiring other builders, such as Bertus Olivier and Lourens Sturgeon, the latter who builds SAR models today for a living. These locomotives all used the Athearn SD40-2 chassis.

Various drawing and articles of rolling stock and locomotives have appeared over the years in the newsletters. Most of these are of the SAR prototypes and if they were to be collected, would make a very decent archive. Many of the modellers mentioned earlier have constructed prime rolling stock over the years in this regard.

## NIGHT RUNNING

Unfortunately, this club's initial R30-00 annual fee didn't include bed and breakfast, but it did, however, include many evenings of night running. These all-nighters were held regularly during the school holidays, and were very well attended by many of the night-owls in the club such as Matthew J van Rensburg, Uncle Stofie, Johan Voordewind, Charles van Rooyen and others. You knew such an event was happening when you saw a whole bunch of caravans pulling onto the property in preparation:- this must be the best form of camping ever. *"I only attended one of these events,"* says Terrence, *"and those boys did run all night."*



*Matthew especially enjoyed it, and kept us all entertained with stories of his travels overseas to places we've never been to, and he had the stamina to remain awake all night as he had been cabin crew on SAA for many years, and long days had been a norm to him."* Needless to say, come the following afternoon at 16:00, there were a number of very tired members who had been running trains on the layout for more than 30 hours.

### **EXCURSIONS**

PMT's members were fortunate to arrange many social outings, such as a trip to SENTRARAND (1996), and a trip on the University on Wheels which consisted of two modified suburban coaches, the Simon Hubinger and Emmerentia, which were used for driver training (1997). This particular trip took 20 club members from Germiston to Heidelberg, Sentra Rand, Pyramid, Pretoria, Kempton Park and back to Elsburg station. Other trips included visits to the Blue Train shops in Koedoespoort (Charles) and to Rovos Rail (Hans), where we got to see the inside of that train as well, trips on the Friends of the Rail train to Cullinan (Pierre/Kobus Steyn), a formal visit to the diesel depot (Martin) and even a ride on the Blue Train on 5 June 1999 – this latter occurred one Saturday afternoon when the train had arrived at Pretoria Station, and 20 members were allowed to take a walk-through of the train once the passengers had disembarked. At the same time the members were treated to ride the train briefly, as it was being turned on the wye in Pretoria West so that it was ready for cleaning and its return trip to Cape Town. The trips on the University and to Sentra Rand were arranged by Harry Ostrofsky who was a member of EMRIG. Most of these visits occurred because the gentlemen concerned were all working in the various SAR sections.

### **SWAP MEETS**

I don't know what the situation was before the formation of PMT, but swap meets back in the day were few and far between, not as full-up as they are today. The first swap meet recorded in the PMT Signal was the one held in October 1996.

By 2000, PMT were already hosting two swap meets, one in April and one in September, generally in the school hall during the school holidays. PMT and the other local clubs then moved on to hosting four times a year, on a roster that is under the sterling control of Mervyn Mark today. PMT presently hosts four swap meets annually, during the school holidays, and these are generally well attended by both the public and the dealers.

PMT has also, over the years, issued commemorative freight cars manufactured for the members to purchase. The first was a yellow 50' boxcar, which was issued for the 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, and the second

was a maroon Frateschi tanker, for the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, both with the club's badge on them. The tanker sometimes comes up for sale at swap meets, and makes for an interesting conversation piece when it runs in a train.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership fees for the first year were R30-00 per annum, after which they went up gradually as the economy pressed, but it was still cheaper than a copy of Model Railroader at the CNA. We used to boast that our fees equated to \$2.50 per year, the cheapest on the planet. By 2025, the fees had increased to R200-00 per annum, still highly competitive amongst the model railway clubs.

Membership has ebbed and flowed over the years, and seems to average at about 25 members annually of which, alas, less than half are constructively active in the day-to-day affairs of the club. When the club was originally formed, this was the range of membership that was hoped for for PMT, but this number is a far cry from the high of 120 members that we had one year. There were several years where PMT had 50+ members on the books (but with less than half of them active), hence the need for "booking" run time, with interest from as far away as Pietersburg (Kobus du Preez) and Bloemfontein (Theuns Wessels), Free State (Benno van den Heever), and others.



***Image 7** Willie Smit's squatter camp, Madiba's Village, was always a popular module. Willie was a talented PMT modeller.*

(Ed. This article will be continued next month...)

## **How It All Began For Me...**

*Finally... (about two years later!), we now have Rene' Bosch's personal story!! 😊😊😊*

*Those who have told us their stories so far are: John B (May 2021), Jimmy M (June 2021), Colin A (July 2021), Kobus P (Aug 2021), Mia vB (Sept 2021), Kevin C (Oct 2021), Ralph D (Nov 2021), Rene' B (Dec 2021), Brian D (Feb 2022), Mark P (Aug 2022), Glynn C (Sept 2022), Clive S (Oct 2022), Jean D (Nov 2022), Ash P (Dec 2022), guest Don Davidson – from SAG and GFG (Jan 2023), Niel W (Mar 2023), Duncan H (Apr 2023), Shane B (May 2023), guest Brian Stockland – from HRCASA (July 2023), guest Brian Clark – from SAG and GFG (Aug 2023), guest Johnny Everitt – ex DMR and honorary member of John B's Ops Group (Sept 2023), guest Andrew Mabin – from HRCASA and owner of MiniModels (Dec 2023), guest Neil Plumbly from GFG / WFG (March 2024), Brian McM – all the way from the UK (April 2024), Eugene S (May 2024), Terrence Marx (July 2024), Kallie vB (Aug 2024), guest Mike Richardson – from SAG and GFG (Oct 2024), Kevin B (Nov 2024), guest Richard Goodfellow – from HRCASA (February 2025), and guest Michelle Lines-Dovey – from HRCASA (August 2025).*

## **How model trains became part of René's life... and still are!!**

We all have a moment of true memory of where our love for trains started.

As a small kid, I would guess aged 3, my first memories go back to the most reliable toy train available – sorry, it wasn't Marklin, but BRIO! Those wooden trains were the best ever, and still are!!!

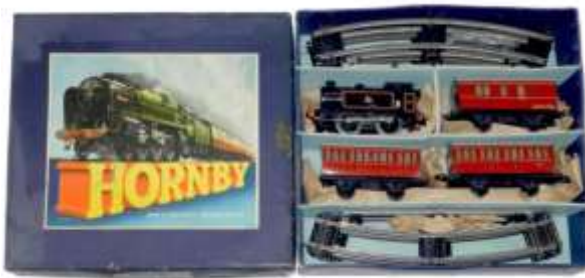


Playing in front of the fireplace on Sundays after church as a boy aged 3 or 4 years old, mixing wooden Brio trains with Montini building blocks, Britains plastic farm animals and Tomte plastic cars, it was heaven!! There were no limits to your imagination, creating your own little world!! Scale issues were no problem then! It was the start of evolving to even better things!



It was a repeat, every Sunday, until I was about 5, and our Italian neighbours gave us a 2<sup>nd</sup> hand Hornby “O” gauge train set! My brothers and I were too happy... but my mother..... !!

“Moet dat nou! Weg met dat rotsooi, het maakt alleen lawaai en veels te groot”, and we now had to go and play in the passage – but my mother did not like that idea for long!



*All the above Brio, Montini, Britains, Tomte and Hornby pics were borrowed off the internet – Ed.*



My father, being a technical perfectionist as an aircraft mechanic, gave the Hornby one look and said very diplomatically that he had a solution.... "Get rid of that junk!", and he did, and bought us a real train, an American Fleischmann HO train set instead, and everybody was happy, including my Mom.

Years went by, and the HO Fleischmann trains slowly also increased in number, evolving to European trains, and the passage in the house became too small.

My Dad improvised a modular setup for outside, with chipboard sections serving as towns measuring approximately 2,2m by 60cm, with long double-track sections joining them. Many Sundays we would play with our trains outside on the lawn. But building the layout and putting up buildings and vehicles on ground level took its toll.

Next came a more permanent layout around Dad's single garage, but the Peugeot 404 had to sleep in there as well. It worked, with one side, about 40cm wide, being permanent, and the other side folding down, with a nice big town at the front, and a massive bridge on the garage door side! Wow – did we enjoy that!!

1971 came, and it changed my whole model train experience in one go!!

Fleischmann brought out N Scale trains, and I immediately converted myself to N Scale as my father gave me a small N Scale set! I was made!! At last a normal model train scale, not Heavenly Oversized!!! You could now fit it everywhere!

In my bedroom, my desk, intended for study, became a place for a small layout. A KIBRI farm, a Faller Station, a Vollmer church, Preiser men, Wiking vehicles... they were there. It was my own small world!! In those days, Happy Hobbies in Benoni was a good friend to the train community!, and otherwise there was a Train shop in Springs, close to the station!!

If you wanted to venture further, Redleys and Hobbies & Models in JHB were a worthwhile visit during school holidays, taking the journey by train. As a kid your pocket money could at least support your hobby!!

It did not take long, and my brother and I built a 2.4m x 1.2m layout in his bedroom, and the hobby became more serious. Every school holiday we would go by train from Benoni to Johannesburg, to enrich our layout with additional train equipment. But again, it did not take long and school was finished, the Army was next, and trains had to wait. After Army came apprenticeship, and becoming a Tradesman at least secured an income to buy some more train stock!

The layout became more professional, and DCC as the first N Gauge with sound was acquired in 1995. What a major step forward! Ulenbrock controller and making all your points DCC, and playing model trains became easy, with no complex analogue wiring!!

As time went along I ventured into HO, HO 12mm SAR, G scale, some Z scale, live steam 45mm track, Cape Gauge 1, and even TT. Strangely they all had an appeal for me, but N Gauge stays my loved one... you can have a decent length train running in the same space as HO, and it does not look like a toy setup out of the '50s, but with HO 12mm being my heart's choice, so specialized and nationalistic, you just got to do it! Brings up memories of an older South Africa that you cannot believe – and the material available now is amazing!

And now, once trains are in your blood, it's like an addiction! You can try to suppress it, but you cannot get rid of it. At least now I can assist other train lovers in their hobby, having a relevant train (*Trainz* ☺) shop specializing in the South African scene. It does let me feel good, being a train hobby man in my genes!



*The opening of @Trainz in Benoni, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018 (photos added by BL Dawson)*

## **The EMRIG Water Tower Challenge...**

By no-one again this month

### **Water Tower Challenge Honours Board**

- 2015 October            Glynn Chamberlain
- 2015 November        Niel Wilson
- 2015 December        Terrence Marx (Part 1)
- 2016 January           Terrence Marx (Part 2)
- 2016 February         Terrence Marx (Part 3)
- 2016 March             Terrence Marx (Part 4)
- 2016 April              Peter Fish
- 2016 May                Colin Anstis
- 2016 June                Dave Wynne
- ..... **then the ball got dropped for a bit... (no newsletters, change of Editor, etc...)**
- 2017 March              Brian Dawson

- 2017 April Kevin Chamberlain
- 2017 May Kobus Pelsler (Part 1)
- 2017 June Kobus Pelsler (Part 2)
- 2017 July Kobus Pelsler (Part 3)
- 2017 August *Doug Buchanan didn't participate (write), needs to donate to charity!*
- 2017 September Karel van Breda
- 2017 October Carl Andrews
- 2017 November and December and 2018 January ..... **no contributions** .....
- 2018 February Margaret Wynne (who stepped in and offered to fill the gap!)
- 2018 March & April ... *waiting for articles* .....
- 2018 May Ash Pappa
- 2018 June John Henry (volunteered an article)
- 2018 July Margaret Wynne entertained us with her story on trollies!
- 2018 August .... *Nothing once again...* ☹
- 2018 September Brian Dawson
- 2018 October .... *Nothing once again...* ☹
- 2018 November ... *same story...*
- 2018 December ... *same story...* ☹
- 2019 Jan to Apl ...*still nothing had changed* ☹ ... *and THEN.....!!!!*
- 2019 May, June, July & Aug Kobus Pelsler (*thank you for all your hard work, Kobus!*)
- 2019 September Shane Brinkley (all the way from Perth!!)
- ..... *and nothing happened after that.....* ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹, *until.....!!*
- 2020 April Mark Peddle
- 2020 May George Lagoudis
- 2020 July, Aug, Sept Harry Ostrofsky
- 2020 November Jean Dulez
- 2020 December *No contribution (no one was nominated.....)*
- 2021 January *No contribution – Theuns dropped the ball!, and so I challenged Glynn...*

- 2021 February Glynn Chamberlain
- 2021 March Shane Brinkley
- 2021 April *Mark asked for a month's grace, and then another couple....*
- 2021 August Mark Peddle (who then challenged Craig...)
- 2021 September ... *waiting..*
- 2021 October Craig Beretta
- 2021 December Eugene Saayman
- 2022 January Jean Dulez (*who kindly volunteered and submitted another article*)
- 2022 February Niel Wilson
- 2022 April & May Kobus Pelser
- 2022 July Colin Anstis
- 2022 October Richard Mustoe
- 2022 November Brian McMahon
- 2023 July Glynn Chamberlain
- 2023 August Kallie van Breda
- 2023 September Mia van Breda
- 2023 November Clive Shepherd
- 2024 February Duncan Hornby
- 2024 October Kallie van Breda

***Club Diary and Other Upcoming Activities:-***

- 27<sup>th</sup> March – 5<sup>th</sup> April **Club layout set up at Benoni Junior School (\*)**
- Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May **EMRIG Swap Meet (\*)**
- Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June PMT Swap Meet, John Vorster Tech. High School, Pretoria
- Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August Transportation Fair, Wynand Marais Hall, Birchleigh (\*)
- Weekend 29<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> August The Hobby Show, Heartfelt Arena, Pretoria (\*?) (TBC)



- Weekend 26<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> September CSME Engineering Fair, Centurion
- Weekend 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> October The Great Model Train Expo, Wynand Marais Hall, Birchleigh (\*)

### **2026 Club Committee Contact details:-**

The committee membership for 2026 remains unchanged... same composition and portfolios as for 2025... At the AGM, the 2025 Committee was re-elected *en bloc*, with just James Job offering to assist Kobus with Swap Meet arrangements.

Chairman – Mark Peddle	<a href="mailto:mark@icemountain.co.za">mark@icemountain.co.za</a>
Secretary – Duncan Hornby	<a href="mailto:info@emrig.co.za">info@emrig.co.za</a>
Treasurer – Mia van Breda	<a href="mailto:finance@emrig.co.za">finance@emrig.co.za</a>
Webmaster – Glynn Chamberlain	<a href="mailto:glynn.chamberlain@gmail.com">glynn.chamberlain@gmail.com</a>
Newsletter Editor – Brian Dawson	<a href="mailto:brian.dawson@iafrica.com">brian.dawson@iafrica.com</a>
Publicity – Kobus Pelser	<a href="mailto:swapmeets@emrig.co.za">swapmeets@emrig.co.za</a>
Swap Meet Manager – Kobus Pelser	<a href="mailto:swapmeets@emrig.co.za">swapmeets@emrig.co.za</a>
(now assisted by James Job)	

### **Club Banking Details:-**

Banking details: -

Name: - Eastern Model Railway Interest Group

Bank: - FNB Northmead Square Account No: - 625 483 74149 Branch code: - **250 655.**

Please, **DO NOT forget to put YOUR NAME as the reference.**

**THE CLUB'S BUDGET FOR 2026 WAS DISCUSSED AT THE AGM IN JANUARY. IT WAS AGREED THAT THE SUBSCRIPTION FEE FOR 2026 WOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED, AT R240,00 FOR THE YEAR. A FAMILY MEMBERSHIP RATE DOES NO LONGER APPLY.**

**MEMBERS JOINING DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WILL PAY ON A PRO-RATA BASIS.**



***SO, IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, IT IS TIME TO PAY YOUR SUBS!!! 😊***

**PLEASE CAN WE ASK THAT EVERYONE PAY BY INTERNET TRANSFER IF AT ALL POSSIBLE? – CASH DEPOSITS END UP COSTING THE CLUB MONEY!!!**