

Newsletter – SEPTEMBER 2026

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Chairman's Message – September 2026

By Mark Peddle

Dear Model Train Enthusiasts,

Although it has been a relatively quiet month in terms of club activities, our attention was firmly focused on planning and hosting the Swap Meet held on **29th August 2026**.

SWAP MEET SUCCESS: Club Members Keep Things on Track!

Once again, our club members rolled up their sleeves and worked together to ensure that the event ran like clockwork. The Swap Meet was held at **Benoni Junior School**, which required a little extra preparation.

The tables were delivered on Friday and were set up that afternoon in preparation for the event. Traders arrived bright and early on Saturday morning and were ready to start trading by 8:30 a.m. The morning proved to be busy and successful, with a steady flow of visitors throughout.

The **Catering Division**, expertly managed by our "Noodles" family, **James and Robyn**, delivered great refreshments on the day. Thank you to everyone who helped James and Robyn.



The food section received excellent support, and we would like to thank everyone who purchased refreshments and helped make it a success. We do apologise to those who were hoping for **pannekoek (pancakes)**, but unfortunately these were not available this time around.



We also had a small modular layout on display, staffed by club members throughout the morning. It attracted a great deal of interest, with many visitors stopping to admire the layout and learn more about our hobby and club activities.





Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and effort, and to all who attended and supported the event. Your continued enthusiasm helps make these gatherings such an enjoyable success.

EVENTS

Please look out for upcoming dates. We would love as many members as possible to be part of the journey — and feel free to bring a friend or two along to share the enjoyment.

Stay up to date with upcoming activities through our monthly newsletter and Facebook page.

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)

A Special Model Trains Event Happening at Northmead Square This Month!

We were contacted a while ago by the management of **Northmead Square** (just over a kilometre northwest of Northmead Mall, corner of O'Reilly Merry Road and Fourteenth Ave) in Benoni, with regard to our being involved in a "Model Trains Event" that they wish to host at their shopping centre. It's taken a while to get everything confirmed and arranged (this is what was delaying the finalisation and publication of our August newsletter), but finally we can let everyone know what is happening!

The request from Northmead Square (NMS) is that we set up our EMRIG layout in the concourse at Northmead Square for a weekend, and run our trains there. They also want to have a "mini-swap meet" type of activity happening, with a (limited due to space) number of traders there specifically selling model train-related items. This event, to be extensively promoted by both NMS and ourselves, as well as the local press and the local schools, will serve to bring additional feet to their mall (using our layout on display, with trains running, as the attraction), while also promoting our existence as a model train club in Benoni, as well as promoting the model train hobby in general, particularly to the youth. An idea of ours is to also involve other model train clubs that have small portable layouts that could be set up alongside ours (there is, however, a space limitation), or at least offer them a table from where they too can promote their clubs through displays, flyers, posters, etc.

The plan is to **hold this event over the weekend 26th and 27th September**. But doing so, with there being a public holiday on 24th September, also gives us the opportunity to set up the layout earlier, say on the Wednesday 23rd, and then have train running opportunities for club members there from the Wednesday to the Sunday (23rd / 24th / 25th / 26th and 27th).

What provides a bit of a challenge is that we as a club are expected to be **running trains all day on the Saturday and the Sunday**, probably between the hours of 09h00 and 17h00 on the Saturday (but not necessarily these extended hours on the Wed - Friday), and until 15h00 on the Sunday, when we would start to dismantle the layout. We will need to set up a roster for train-running on the Saturday and Sunday in order to achieve this (similar to what we did for The Hobby Show at NASREC). The traders present on those two days would also be expected to have wares available for sale all day, although a possibility is to have a set of traders there on the Saturday, and then a different set of traders there on the Sunday, if traders do not want to, or are not able to, remain trading for both days. Storage space will be provided by NMS for the traders' wares overnight, if they are trading for the two days.

The layout will obviously remain set up at Northmead Square for the full period (over-nights), and NMS will provide additional security to protect the layout (as NMS only closes at 22h00 in the evenings).

This special event provides us with a great opportunity to promote both our club and our hobby, in addition to showing off our superb layout, and we trust that all our club members will participate with enthusiasm, so that we can put on a tremendous show for the public.

Mini-modules Updates

The staging yard modules were duly completed in time for the yard to be included in the layout set up at Benoni Junior School in July. The yard had not yet been ballasted, and all the points required manual operation, although provision had been made for the later addition of point motors to allow for the use of a switchboard for their operation. On a couple of the straight-track modules Niel wanted to "straighten up" some track. And on further reflection following the July set-up, Niel decided that it would be good to add in some additional points on the "ladder" modules, to allow for a couple of extra sidings in the yard for train storage.

Since July, Niel has re-laid the track where that was required, and Brian is now busy with ballasting the straight-track modules. Niel and James have also completed the installation of the extra points and laying track for the sidings, and the plan is for those modules to also be ballasted, by October, in time for inclusion in the layout at the TGMTExpo on the 24th and 25th.



Ballasting of the staging yard is underway...

Progress with module development by other members:

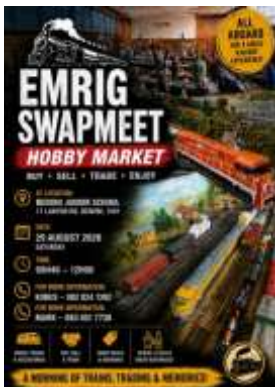
Niel reports that a further two module kits have been shipped off to Knysna, so we'll be waiting to see what happens in that regard... I'm sure BrianM will update us in due course.

Terrence still has some work to do with the scenicking of his oil refinery / fuel depot modules, looking for an appropriate refinery structure, and other appurtenant works. He has, however, already made a start with the additional modules that he bought. Turns out that this is actually an additional inverse curve module set, and he has some interesting plans to do something a bit different, track-wise, on this curve. Having another inverse curve available will add all sorts of new possibilities in terms of future layout configurations! He has assembled the curve modules, but not yet started with any of the track-laying.

James and Robyn have not made any further progress with the scenicking of their modules since the previous reporting. James has spent all his spare time assisting Niel with the modifications to the staging yard, with Robyn having been "rather busy at work", and too tired to even think of working on the modules when back at home.

Neil Plumbly has completed the little bit of outstanding work on his double-track trestle bridge, and his bridge will be available for inclusion in the layout for the Expo.

Swap Meets Feedback and Schedule, and Expo and Toy Fair etc. Dates



The most recent Swap Meet was the one we hosted on Saturday 29th August, held at Benoni Junior School once again. Kobus managed to squeeze 47 trader tables into the available space in the school hall. There were 12 trader groups participating. Traders attending included Neil Plumbly & Co with 8 tables, Jabaville (7 tables), Mervyn Mark (7 tables), Tish Goodenough (6 tables), Danie Pienaar (5 tables), Len Swanepoel (4 tables), and another six traders each with a smaller number of tables. The aisles were narrow, but everyone seemed to still manage okay. Great to have Mervyn back at a swap meet again, together with a couple of "assistants" helping him with sales!

The buying public was once again kept waiting outside until the hall doors were opened at 08h45, giving the traders the very welcome opportunity they needed to finish setting up in peace, and then grab a coffee and something to eat, and have a quick comfort break, before the trading started.



Traders busy setting up



Traders checking what Mervyn has on offer



And then the buyers arrived...



Sadly, we had learnt on the Thursday, three days before the swap meet, that one of our regular traders, Danie van Zyl, who routinely takes 3 tables, always assisted by his wife, had just passed away. So Danie, sadly, with three tables booked, up against the stage, next to Francois Delport, was not there... Our commiserations and sympathy are extended to Danie's wife and the rest of their family. R.I.P., Danie.



Danie van Zyl, displaying his wares, at our August 2025 Swap Meet at Northmead Mall

Fortunately for the swap meet, Kobus had a “waiting list” of traders who had hoped to be there, but for whom there had not been space, and he was able to bring someone in at short notice, to take Danie’s place.

For this swap meet we set up a small oval (the four corners, plus 12x straights) modular layout (no staging yard ☹) in the hall’s foyer area (the music classroom – the only space available, as the stage is used as a storage area due to the school’s critical space shortage), using Kobus’ Three Sisters and eight of Terrence’s modules, along with the club’s corners. A couple of the club members ran trains there throughout the course of the swap meet. Quite a bit of work involved in that, setting up (fortunately, being at the school, it could mostly be done on the Friday afternoon) just for three hours of train running, but at least we had the layout (well – just a small portion of it!) on display once more.



Our little layout in the foyer: (L) sorting out alignment, and (R) visitors watching trains running

The layout was also used as a “test bed” for a couple of DCC locos which buyers had bought “on appro”, and wanted to test, just like the old days when we had the big layouts at Northmead Mall.

Once again, James and Robyn organised the food stall, and this time had a bit of help from a couple of other club members and their family members (Mia and Kallie were away, otherwise Mia would have been helping again), meaning that they could then also get into the hall to see what was on sale (unlike last time), and even buy a thing or two! The breakfast buns and the boerie rolls were well received, although again the traders and buyers were asking where the pancakes were... We just don’t have enough helping hands involved to be able to set up the swap meet (which in our case always entails helping the traders with bringing in their wares), set up and operate a layout, plus do the breakfast buns and boerie rolls and liquid refreshments, and then still bake pancakes.... Sorry, guys ☹.



Food stall ready and waiting, and customers enjoying their boerie rolls (photo credits: Terrence Marx)



Thanks to all the club members (and some assistants from the school) who pitched in and were able to help with setting out the tables, bringing modules and setting up the layout, manning the gate, directing traffic, helping the traders to bring in their wares from their cars, organising (including all the running around to buy the food and beverages) and running the food stall, running some trains, and then all the dismantling, packing away and cleaning up of the hall afterwards. And also to Kobus and James, for all the organising that happens beforehand. There's a lot of work behind the scenes that goes into hosting a Swap Meet!

The traders we spoke to all reported good sales on the day, with a couple of them saying that it had been really good for them! Although it seemed as if there might have been a few less buyers attending than last time out (we have no way of knowing, as we do not record "feet through the door"), it seems that those who did come certainly brought money with them!

One negative aspect was reported through a Whatsapp message, obviously sent to Mervyn, and passed on to Kobus... *"Hello Mervyn. I have nothing against you or any of the sellers at today's meeting, but what happened today is not acceptable... where you get two buyers that runs around grabbing arms full of stuff, and leaving nothing for others. And I'm not the only one with the same problem. We know that you need to sell to whoever wants to buy – no problem – we are not upset with the sellers. But maybe at the next swap meeting let only those two individuals be allowed, and the rest of us will stay at home."* Clearly – one (and apparently also a few more) very upset customer....!! Such a pity that this kind of behaviour by one or two individuals should spoil the swap meet experience for many other loyal customers. The Committee's take on this is that we cannot dictate to the traders who they can sell to and how they should manage their sales. It's up to the traders themselves to determine how they go about their business – we are just providing the venue and the collective opportunity for trading to take place. But we are requesting the buying public, and in particular those "bulk-buyers" who "run around grabbing armfuls of stuff", to show some restraint, and consideration for the rest of the model train fraternity who aren't as pushy or perhaps don't have the same amount of money to splash around.

With Northmead Mall management having confirmed to us in writing that they are kindly waiving their requirement for Public Liability Insurance cover, we will be going back there for our end-of-November Swap Meet. Northmead Mall is planning something a little different to coincide with that occasion (we don't yet know all the details), but we are expecting that to be another BIG swap meet, being able to accommodate more traders there, and will also have the opportunity to set up a somewhat bigger layout there.

The **Swap Meets calendar for what remains of 2026** follows below ↓.

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*

Here are some other relevant Gauteng model train dates.... (all previously provided)

- **CSME's annual Engineering Fair**, with superb live steam action and the renowned radio-controlled trucks, will be taking place on the weekend **26th and 27th September** (same weekend as our Northmead Square special event, sadly), but they're also open and running trains there every Sunday. (See their advert below ↓↓)
- **The Great Model Train Expo 2026** is taking place on the weekend **24th – 25th October 2026**. (See that advert below ↓↓↓)
- The last **Richie's Toy Fair** of the year is on **Saturday 7th November**.



Scheduled EMRIG Layout Set-ups And Future Activities

As explained above, we will be setting up the layout at **Northmead Square** from **23rd until 27th September**, for that special event NMS have asked us to put on. Because of this, we will then not be setting up the layout at Benoni Junior School during the remaining few days of the September school holidays. The NMS layout will be as big as we can fit into the available space at the mall. We still need to check on module availability from members, and then Niel needs to do the layout design, to fit the available space, but it's unlikely to be quite as big as we have been able to achieve at the school).

We will, however, have a big expanded layout at the **Great Model Train Expo** in October, including the staging yard as a new element, along with the bridges, not seen there before. We just need to check how much space Willie will have available for us (and then bear in mind that we have to pay the equivalent of trader table-space to be there!).

We expect to be invited back to the last **Richie's Toy Fair** for 2026, happening on 7th November, unless anything untoward happens. That one will need to be a small layout again, due to the space limitation there, but we would then probably look to include the newer elements in that layout. The Toy Fair takes place at the Mosaic Church hall in Fairland.



And with our Swap Meet at the end of November now confirmed as being held at Northmead Mall, we are planning to have a “somewhat bigger than our usual swap meet” sized layout, as we will have a bit more space available for setting up. Look out for updates in this regard, as the “event” that NMM is envisioning for the day is still in the planning phase.

An Ops Session on Our Layout?

During one of our running sessions at Benoni Junior School in July I noticed Ralph, after he had run some of his trains, walking round and round the “expanded version” layout, checking things out and writing down stuff in a notebook he was carrying around. It all looked very serious...

A few days later, Ralph had come up with a 5-page document entitled “EMRIG Operations Sessions”. I have to confess that, at first glance, it all looked rather complicated, and I put it aside to look at when I had some time on my hands. The first opportunity that I had to discuss it with Ralph was at the Swap Meet at the end of August, standing next to our little layout, watching mine and Leon’s trains running round and round.

Ralph assured me that the suggested Ops format is nowhere near as complicated as it looks, with maybe four operators running trains simultaneously during a session that might last an hour (or two if everyone is having fun!), with other club members serving as yard foremen, and a despatcher in overall command.

Different train types (passenger/mixed freight/unit fuel or coal/ mixed passenger & freight) would have different routine activities (station stops for the passengers, drop-offs and pick-ups for the freight trains), but the fun and real interest in the sessions would come from the “roll of the dice” concept, where suddenly obstacles are placed in the way of the routine running! And the dice would be rolled two to four times during a session. The operator might, for instance, be required to drop off a particular passenger coach that has developed an axle problem, replacing it with another previously placed, waiting on a siding in the yard, or else be required to change locos during the session, due to a mechanical problem that has arisen. Or a scheduled wagon pick-up has been cancelled... or the crew’s working hours have expired, and a relief crew is required to take over... or a loco develops a problem out on track and is unable to continue, and a relief loco has to be brought out to take over the train... The possibilities are almost endless!!

We have relatively few sidings on our layout – two on Terrence’s modules (his stock yard and fuel depot/refinery), one at Brian’s Building Supplies, one at Colin’s station, a few on Ralph’s Hyena Drift, and another for the brewery on his Richie’s Diner module. We also currently have very few cross-over opportunities on the layout, where trains (or just locos) can cross over between the inner and outer mainline tracks – a reciprocal set on Terrence’s modules, and again on Hyena Drift. But if these cross-over points are placed strategically in the layout configuration, they can be used to great effect for “running around”, and for allowing trains on the outer mainline to access the sidings, all of which, currently, exit off the inside mainline. But we could certainly do with a few more such cross-overs, for anyone developing modules in future!

We need to give this a shot! Let’s try it out next time we have an “extended layout configuration” set up, once the layout is sorted out and running well, have Ralph explain the concept to us, and then give it a trial run and see how we like it. Gotta beat just running round and round, guys!



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. 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.

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!!! 😊

NEW..... The **YouTube channel**! Yip – we have a YouTube channel! Hopefully more and more of the club’s train-running and other activities will also be being posted there in future...

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.

Sorry – no Letters to the Editor again this month.... 😊

My Kiwi Rail Model Train

by Ralph Davey

Hi everyone.

This article covers my introduction to modelling New Zealand Railway trains. This is my Class DC locomotive and rolling stock.

Following on from my Australian trip, my wife and I went to New Zealand to visit our other daughter and family in Auckland from March 2026 to May 2026. As part of this trip I was able to see and ride trains in New Zealand, and also joined the North Shore Model Railroad Club in Auckland (see my article in the EMRIG newsletter published previously).

Following my Australian Great Southern train purchase when I was in Australia, I decided that I wanted a New Zealand model train as well. While in NZ we also did the Glenbrook Vintage Railway (GVR) trip, and I was able to get up close to an actual DC class locomotive, which was super. The locomotives were in peak and excellent condition, and to hear the EMD 645 prime mover engine idling, while up close, is awesome.



GVR's EMD power

KiwiRail Class DC Locomotive

These locomotives have an interesting history, and a unique wheel arrangement. The DC class were originally purchased as DA class locomotives, with 146 manufactured by GM-EMD London Ontario Canada between 1955 and 1967. Later in their life, in 1983, 85 of them were rebuilt into class DC locomotives by Clyde Engineering in Australia. Many are still operational, giving support to the known history that a "Chevy" just keeps on going. The Wheel arrangement is A1A-A1A – six wheel, but the centre axle is not powered with a traction motor. This is for load improvement on New Zealand's Cape Gauge (3'6") track. The engine prime mover is a GM EMD 12 cylinder 645C. The Power output: 1424hp. They can get up to a maximum speed of 100km/h.



Class DC at Glenbrook Vintage Railway, and a well-weathered Class DXC on South Island

My KiwiRail DC Class Locomotive

The only available HO/OO scale models in New Zealand are Frateschi models. The locomotive models are similar to what we have in South Africa for SAR Class 31 and Class 34 General Electric (GE) models. These are produced following Frateschi's practice of branding the models for the countries they are used in. Frateschi do the same for Australia and New Zealand as for South Africa, in that they produce and market locomotives and rolling stock for the country based on the export prototypes from the USA. For New Zealand, they also manufacture GM Electro Motive Division (EMD) models, and I decided to get an EMD model. One of the models available is the KiwiRail class DC locomotive. Its full designation is a GM G-22CU locomotive.

Like all of us modellers I was debating whether or not to buy it, and I took two trips to the hobby shop to decide on buying the model. Once I got home and saw how nice it is, I was glad I did buy it. The paint scheme is super, and the model is well made.



First inspection when I bought it. Great model!

Back in South Africa I worked on the model, adding the grab-iron railings, and added knuckle-type couplers.

Railings

The body unclips easily for access and separation. I added the supplied railings. Like on the SAR, the New Zealand Railway locos only have the grab iron railings for access to the cab and rear of the locomotive.



Couplers

Unlike my Great Southern Australian model from Frateschi, this KiwiRail model did not come with the backing plate and option to add knuckle couplers.

The space from the body to the wheel bogey is also limited, so I had to plan and apply the best method for mounting the couplers. I snipped the supplied couplers off from the wheel assembly.

I made a backing plate from plastic card. This I spray painted yellow. I super-glued the plates into the body at both ends. Note – just super-gluing the plates is not a good option, and further strengthening is required. In order to cater for the limited space, and to ensure the couplers were still strong, I drilled a small hole in the backing plate. I snipped off the back section of the coupler where the screw goes through, but left one of the arms long enough to be edged through the hole, but not able to pull out once in place. I then trimmed and glued coupler boxes over the coupler, to give the effect of the full coupler housing.

When I apply this back plate set up on models I add thin (I think they are Peco) track pins through a small hole drilled through the body and the backing plate. I trim off the pin, and these add to the strengthening of the coupler design. Just using super-glue will not last long if the locomotive is run often. The backing plate could break off with usage and locomotive to rolling stock coupling. I decided to place the track pins at the location of the MU cables on the frame. I then had a great brainwave (I'm not just a pretty face!). By pushing the track pins through from the back and then bending them down, I am not only securing the backing plate, but also adding MU cables. I trimmed the pins and added a drop of silver paint to the ends. It looks good.



Backing plate applied, and track pins used to secure it, and to make MU hoses

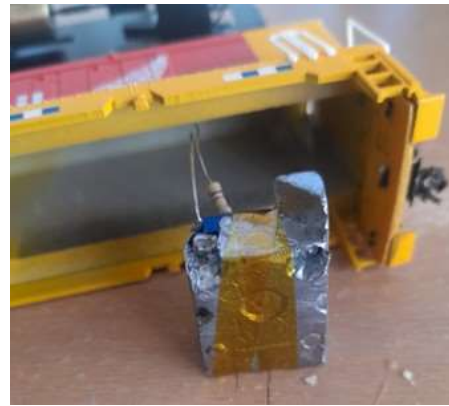


Finished look, and the adaptation of the coupler to fit in the space available

DCC Decoder Fitted

I went to @Trainz, and discussed with Rene' what best standard decoder to get. No sound. I bought a Lenz decoder.

As the decoder does have the two additional functions, I decided to add the rear red marker lights. This required me to drill through the rear weight and install two red LED lights.



Rolling Stock

The one challenge was going to be what rolling stock to acquire and use. In New Zealand, at the hobby shop, there were some freight wagons from Frateschi boxed as New Zealand items. However, they were not prototypical, and did not have any lettering or numbering, and were expensive. The closest model was an ore wagon, the same one Frateschi markets as the SAR wagon. But I was not going to pay the price, nor did I want to get something I was not happy to buy.

While visiting the NSMRC I noted an NZ passenger train, and asked about it. The train has distinctly British-type coaches. It was noted that the New Zealand Railways had purchased second-hand coaches from British Rail. I did some research on this. Starting in the late 1990s, New Zealand purchased around 150 ex-British Rail (BR) Mark 2 coaches. They were converted from the UK's standard 1435mm to New Zealand's narrower 1067mm gauge. These coaches were deployed by operators like Tranz Metro and KiwiRail to replace aging local rolling stock. So, I now had an option to look to buying second-hand BR Mk2 coaches, and refurbishing them into a New Zealand scheme. Many ran in the original BR colour schemes and with their BR numbers.





Examples of the ex-British passenger coaches in New Zealand

In New Zealand, the railway structures made use of the EMD and GE standard locomotive for passenger traffic as well as freight, including suburban fast-moving trains throughout their lives and usage.

For my train options, looking for second-hand passenger coaches and container wagons was the way forward. Both options were much better than buying new, and certainly better value for money. I then started looking and making enquiries for second-hand rolling stock, to see which option to take up.

Passenger Train

I bought six old BR Mk2 coaches for modification, to run as a KiwiRail train.

I modified these to have Kaydee couplers, and added KiwiRail decals.

I removed the buffers, and now have a set of KiwiRail passenger coaches.



Kaydee couplers added and buffers removed



KiwiRail Passenger Train

Container Train

I bought six old British Railway container flats with various containers. I added Kaydee couplers. I modified and re-sprayed the containers, to look more modern. I now have a set of KiwiRail container flat cars as well!



KiwiRail container flats modified from Tri-ang Hornby wagons

I hope you find this article different and informative. I am a happy modeller who has enjoyed modelling trains from South Africa, USA, Britain and Australia, and now also New Zealand.



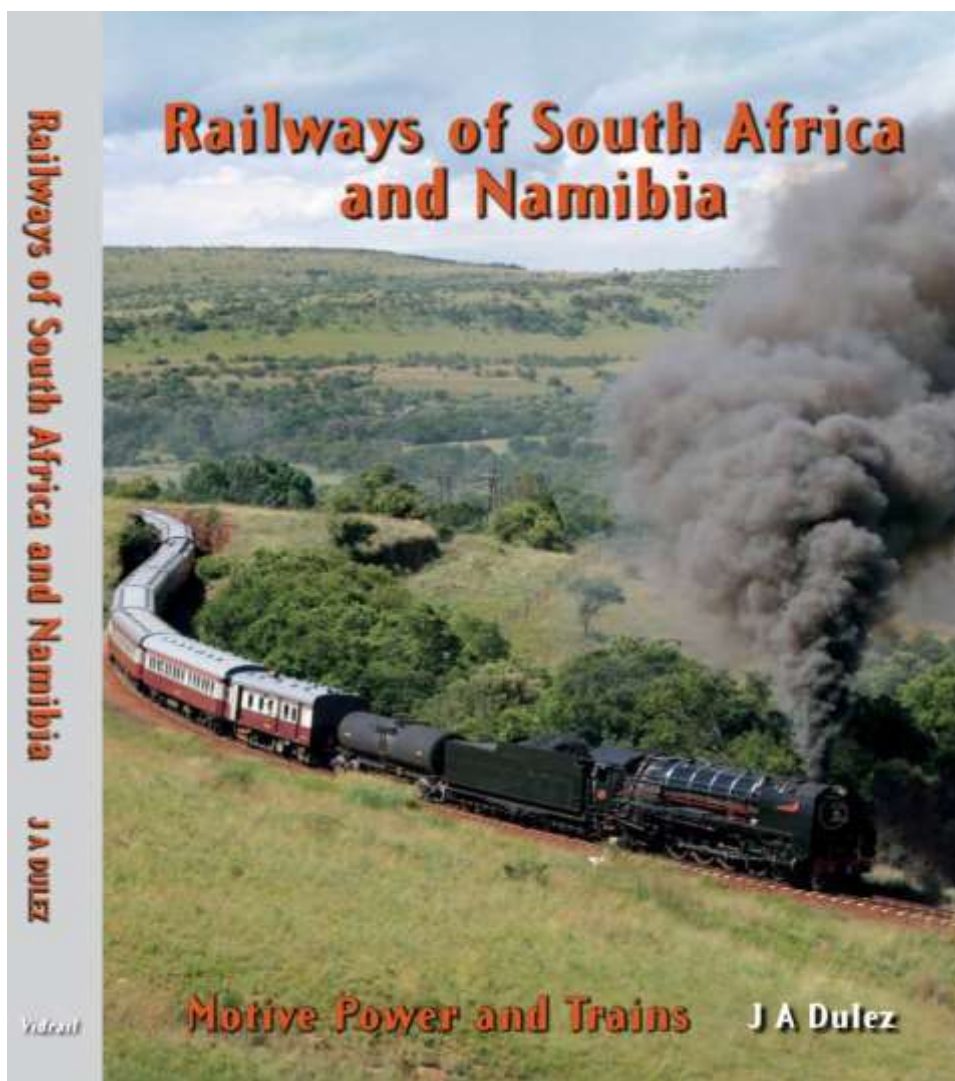
KiwiRail alongside the Australian Great Southern, and KiwiRail hauling the container train, at the recent EMRIG layout set-up at Benoni Junior School

Railways of South Africa and Namibia:

Motive Power and Trains

Latest Book by EMRIG Member Jean Dulez....

Editor's Note: EMRIG member Jean Dulez is a renowned railway photographer, and author of "Railways of Southern Africa: 150 Years", published in 2012, the definitive book on trains that operated in Southern Africa during that period. Jean has now produced the following updated version, bringing this definitive work right up to date, and is making it available to EMRIG members at a discounted price.



Front cover illustration:

Reefsteamers' Class 15F, No 3046, departs Magaliesburg on a sunny December afternoon in 2012, with the crew paying great attention to the firing of the locomotive and its handling over this steeply graded section, known here as the "cutting". This favourite photographers' South African railway location would rival that over the classic Kaaimans' River Bridge, on the now closed George – Knysna line, shown elsewhere in this book. This scene, on the Mahikeng to Krugersdorp main line, has played itself out countless times since the 1970s, but sadly came to an end in January 2019, when the group were obliged to choose another easier destination out of Johannesburg. In fact, steam out of Germiston ceased completely in December of that same year, when Reefsteamers were forced to suspend their steam operations entirely. The Magaliesburg line was also subsequently closed by Transnet due to infrastructure theft during the 2020 pandemic. Traffic from Botswana and further north has since been rerouted south from Mahikeng

via Vryburg, Fourteen Streams junction and thereafter north-east over the electrified Cape main line, eventually re-joining the Free State main line outside Vereeniging. Only here could traffic proceed back north to merge with other main line routes... indeed, a lengthy and time consuming railway detour.

Late in 2023, the Mahikeng to Krugersdorp line was eventually reopened, following infrastructure repairs by Transnet. This had ended Millsite diesel depot's relative isolation status, outside Krugersdorp. Nevertheless, at this time, the main PRASA freight bypass line from the west Rand through to Germiston was still closed. The metro line from Randfontein, through to Krugersdorp and Johannesburg, was finally reopened to limited EMU services in 2025 but no Transnet freight traffic was then permitted through Johannesburg Park station, hence the above Potchefstroom detour route was still in effect at this time (subject to diesel haulage, given no overhead power beyond Randfontein). Photograph: Jean Dulez

Railways of South Africa and Namibia - Motive Power and Trains



This updated and revised second edition reviews the railway development within the South African region (including Namibia) from the beginnings, in 1860, over the following one hundred and sixty years. Comprehensive technical detail regarding the motive power, which had been placed into service with the state managed railway organisations, is covered within the various chapters. The major private railway operations and motive power in the region are also featured. Extensive photographic details of all the locomotive classes and designs are portrayed. In addition, there are numerous photographic records depicting well known trains which have seen service in the region over the years.

The documented railways and steam locomotive designs begin with those from the various systems which were in existence prior to the formation of Union, in 1910. This continues with categorised reviews of the all the subsequent motive power classes of the South African Railways and thereafter, Transnet, as well as the major private operators' locomotives. Next, there are special sections dealing with Metrorail (PRASA).

Namibia's railway system, which had commenced under German colonial administration in 1897, is featured here as well, since the system was administered by the South African Railways from 1915 until 1985, when national operator TransNamib was formed. Varied motive power from South Africa has hence been in service in the country for over 100 years.

This 430 page book contains around 950 black and white archive and 975 colour photographs, many of which have never been published before. In addition, there are some 400 technical drawings or diagrams, 70 major technical specification tables and 10 regional railway maps. For the entire time span to 2021, the author has spared no effort in order to depict the subject matter from a wide and varied perspective. This publication is highly recommended for the railway enthusiast who has a topical interest within this region of the African continent.

Vidrail
P.O. Box 175
2008 Bedfordview
South Africa
www.vidrail.co.za

About the Author

Jean Dulez was born in Grenoble, France, in 1948, but grew up and went to school in South Africa, where his family had emigrated to in 1952. His late father was a civil engineer, and formed his own company in the late 1950s and operated the business from Johannesburg.

During various trips to construction sites, Jean became fascinated by the still extensive steam train operations all over the country. As a high school learner, he soon converted his passion for railways into photographs, slides, 8mm movies, and, much later in life, to the medium of video.

He graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1972 with a degree in mechanical engineering and is also a registered professional engineer. However, career-wise, he has mostly been involved with the design and supply of mining machinery, with railway equipment, as such, remaining a hobby.



Although steam trains were an early passion, he has taken this much further into the modern traction era within this book, a second revised edition of "Railways of Southern Africa, 150 Years", first published in 2012.

He has won photographic awards for some of his railway photography, and also owns Vidrail, which specialises in railway videos and books from around the globe. Apart from South Africa, he has travelled to many other African countries, as well as through all the other continents, in search of railway action records. Vidrail currently lists over 120 movie titles which Jean has produced since 1983.

Jean currently resides in Edenvale, outside Johannesburg, with his wife Vanessa, and also has a sister, who lives in Cape Town.

The book costs R950, with an EMRIG discount of R100, so R850 net, directly from Jean. Shipping is extra (but Jean can make plans to deliver at club meets). Contact Jean on jean.dulez@gmail.com.

A New HOn3 Exhibition Layout – Part 1

By Brian Messenger

Having manned and run the Timesaver (shunting) layout at the recent Knysna Model Railroad and Hobbies Fair in July, it came to light that the public wanted to see trains running around, not moving backwards and forwards as in shunting.



The Knysna Model Railroaders' Timesaver layout under construction in July 2024

I made the decision to build a small, portable, oval type layout in HOn3, for exhibiting at future events. It must be small enough to fit in a vehicle, therefore the layout will be 5' x 2' 6", and very well detailed. I

obtained ISO board of that size, and surrounded it with Masonite (MDF) fascias.



I figured that the largest radius curve that I could get on said board was 13.6 inches.

I used a piece of track curved to that radius – made up a half circle, and proceeded to test an HOn3 Heisler and a C-16 2-8-0 on it. Both ran perfectly.

Next step was to design a track plan to fit, and then deciding what to put on this layout.

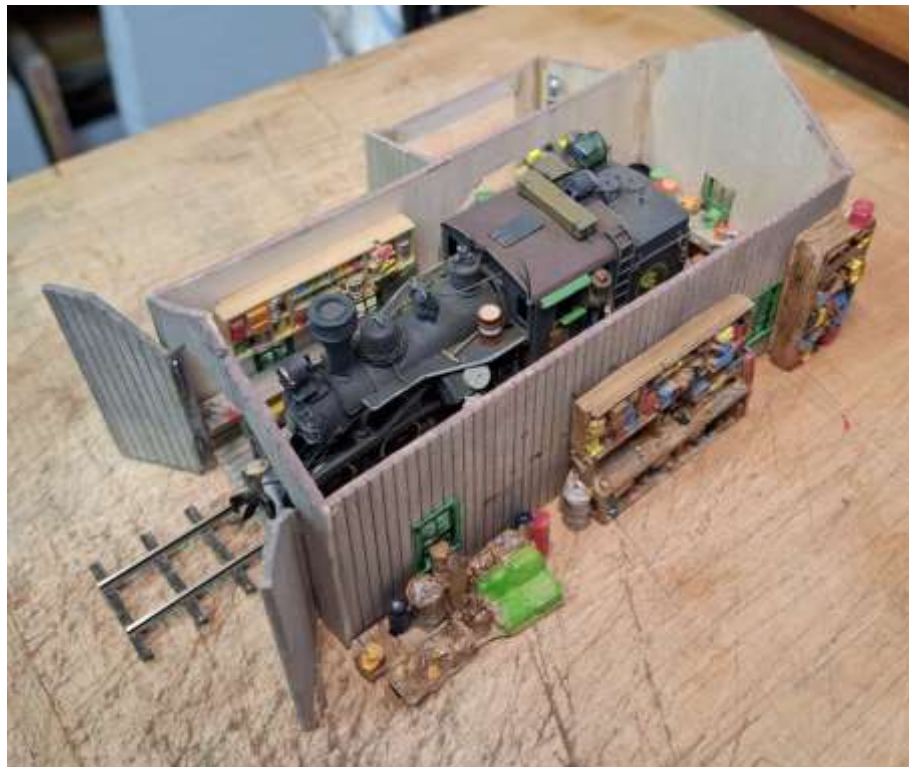


Two main structures that I thought would fit in were a scratch-built single-stall engine house that could handle either of the locomotives, and a scratch-built scrapyard.

The first engine house that I built turned out to be too long for this small layout, so I promptly sold it to a friend and scratch-built a new shorter one. The original one is shown below...



Below, the new shorter one, built in a day and a half. All the interior and exterior details came from my 'bits' box – some already painted, and some needing painting.



I moved away from corrugated iron to a tarpaper roof (I ran out of scale corrugated iron, to be honest).



Below is the scratch-built vehicle scrapyard.



On one of the corners I placed another general scrapyard.



The layout "had to" have a bridge somewhere, so a small lake was located on the opposite side, for the bridge to cross over the inlet.



As there was now a lake being put into the layout, people would need to be able to hire, or bring their own, boats and yachts to go cruising on the “lake”. Scratch-built boat-hire shop duly provided below.



A small town was next, with different shops and related businesses. I also added a scratch-built tractor repair shop.



On the other side of the layout there had to be an industrial area, so what better place to have it than opposite the vehicle scrapyards, just out of picture on the left side. A welding workshop is shown in the background.



The next part of the project was to cut out the lake area...

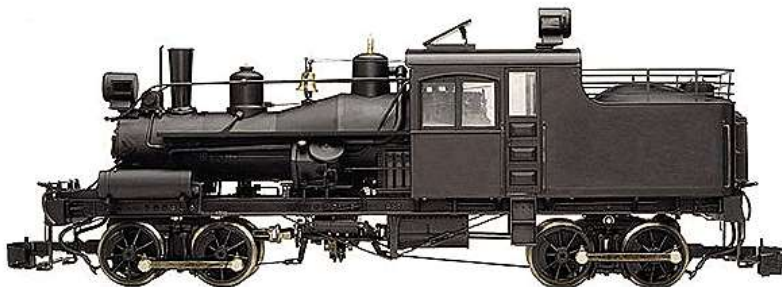


The base of the lake was glued into place and sealed completely to avoid water (resin) leaking through.



Below (next page) is an overhead view to make sure that everything is where it was designed to be, including a graveyard (still to be made) in the bottom left corner, just outside of the “town”. No wasted space here. Top right corner will have a moonshine still, hidden among some trees and bushes.

Top left will have a small sawmill where the water tank is. The layout’s main theme is logging, hence the Heisler loco, and possibly a Shay a bit later.



Walther's Spectrum two-truck Heisler locomotive (www.walthers.com)



This is as far as I have progressed with this project, and now to start laying the track.

No doubt there will be a few minor changes as I progress... ☺

Part 2 will follow next month.

That's it for now, and till next time – keep modelling.

Brian - the HOn3 guy in Knysna.

So How Do You Know Whether It's "Real" Or Not?

Having some fun with AI....

By Brian Dawson

I have to confess to being a bit of a technophobe... I somehow managed to sort-of master running model trains with DCC, and I have even learned how to switch the layout on and off, but I have to pay someone to fix my locos when they're broken, and get someone who knows what they're doing to fit decoders for me. When it comes to anything to do with sorting out issues with my computer or my phone, I get my son or my elder granddaughter to sort them out, and my wife, fortunately, sorts out our TV/sound system/audio connection issues at home very competently.

Sure, I can type readable stuff in basic Word (I like words, in case you hadn't realised!), I can manage a basic Excel spreadsheet, and can prepare very basic Powerpoint presentations, but don't ask me to do any of the fancier stuff like animations, fancy formulae, Coral Draw, Photoshop, or other even more technical stuff... And I still use a hardcover physical diary book – none of this "Outlook" or Google calendar stuff for me!

I failed Physics 1 three times at varsity, but managed to sail through my Botany and Zoology majors, which probably explains why I prefer ballasting, landscaping and scenicking to track-laying, soldering and wiring, when it comes to layout-building. I know enough to leave the technical stuff to the more-technically-inclined guys!

So it probably comes as no surprise, then, to find that I had absolutely no interest whatsoever when I first heard about AI – in fact I believed that AI was a bunch of baloney, especially after seeing an AI-generated video of an elephant calf stuck high up in a tree (which I think was meant as an April-Fools joke!). Really???!!! I kept hearing about (and focussing on) all the negative AI connotations – the plagiarism by varsity students, getting AI to write their assignments; the plethora of really stupid AI-generated "wildlife" and other videos; the fraudulent images and activities and hacking that AI now helps to perpetuate...

My son, who is a programmer / coder / computer fundi, recently suggested that I should "get AI to write an article for your newsletter, Dad. Why don't you try out Claude or ChatGPT?" My emphatic response was a "Never! That's not going to happen!!"

My negativity about AI does appear to be somewhat justified, as I read (in News24 on 27th August) that Bill Gates, who is somewhat more tech-savvy than I ever will be, is also concerned. According to that article, seemingly obtained from AFP on 26th August, *"Bill Gates warned that the world is dangerously unprepared for the AI era, which he said will be among the most turbulent periods in human history. He identified three main risks: permanent job destruction that will hit white-collar fields within a decade, AI-enabled capabilities in the hands of bad actors (see – I told you!!!), and chatbots undermining children's social skills and human relationships. 'AI will either be the greatest equalizer ever invented, or the worst source of injustice', he said."*

But slowly, AI has started creeping into my newsletter-editorial life!... Brian Messenger was the first to mention making use of AI, using it while looking for suggestions as to how to scenic one of his modules, or to decorate a structure that he was busy building. Remember these?

Brian's AI-generated "teaser" photo from his Bridge-build article →

And then some more.... ↓



Gemini AI-suggested lighting, building detailing and scenicking for BrianM's 3D-printed Brewery

And Eugene Saayman's wife added some AI-generated backgrounds to the pics of his German military train on his barren test track, for our report on the Military Trains event at Voortrekker Monument in May...



Then Mark was contacted by Kim, manageress at Northmead Square, wanting us to be involved in the upcoming "model train event" at Northmead Square (described earlier in this newsletter). We needed to develop a written proposal for her, which would be submitted to NMS's management for consideration. Mark's son was visiting at the time, and the two of them used AI (Claude) to develop the first draft of the proposal. It wasn't anything spectacular (it was, however, still a useful starting point), and as a committee we had to do quite a bit of editing and tailoring (the draft kept referring to Northmead Square as if it was

part of Northmead Mall!) to make it more applicable. Mark inserted a number of suitable photos taken recently of our layout and during swap meets. When we were happy with the proposal document, he sent it off to Kim.

Kim had a look at the document, and “did something” to it using AI, and sent the modified proposal back to Mark. The photos had been changed! People in the picture had been deleted! And the tablecloth lengthened, to hide the clutter. I must admit that her version did actually look better than Mark’s...!



One of Mark’s original photos (left), and Kim’s modified version of it (right)

Then, a couple of days ago I received, by email, my latest (24th August 2026) MRH Magazine. And it had a rather intriguing subject line and article link.

Aug 24 - Transform layout photos with AI 🤖 -- Have you seen the August MRH magazine? 📧
8/24/26 10:41 PM
From: "MRH News desk" <news@mrhmag.com>
To: brian.dawson@iafrica.com

[Email not displaying properly? View in browser](#)



The link was actually to the MRH Forum, where the relevant thread heading was “Picture Fun With AI”. I decided to investigate (but only in order to know a little more about how potential future newsletter contributors might be “crooking the books”, by manipulating (“transforming”) pics of their layouts / trains / activities, and what I should be watching out for, obviously!!! ☺). And what fascinating stuff there was, with members of the forum posting pics of stuff they had “transformed” in different ways...

Edmund (“gmpullman”) had posted a couple of pics that he had transformed from a “summer” to a “winter” scene, and provided a bit of an explanation...



“Well I had to take a bite from the AI apple!

“So about ten minutes with the free Gemini version, then about fifteen more in Photoshop...

“A few anomalies, but not bad for my first go 'round! I asked AI to add steam effects but it went overboard so I cancelled that and added my own wisp of steam from Hickory Creek, added my own exhaust and blurred the signal over the F40PH to simulate exhaust. AI scrambled the Pennsy Keystone for some reason? It changed the Metroliner's number to something obscure.

“I think I'm going to have fun with this!”

“Anteum2666” posted the following, with a more technical explanation of what he had actually done...

“Below (on the left) is my original photo. I had already replaced the plain blue sky with a sunset. I asked AI to change this to a stormy scene with water and puddles. I later asked it to add lightning and more weathering, but I found with each rendition it messed up the C&O logos more until they became intertwined S's. Very weird. I used Microsoft Copilot for this AI transformation.”



Michael Tondee had converted a layout pic into a watercolour painting, with the following caption...

*"And one more of a picture that I had already used Affinity on to put a photo sky in.
This could be addicting."*



And another couple of transformations from Michael Tondee...

"This is what happened when I told Copilot to watercolor this pic of my 'Merrill's Point' harbor module and remove the control/scale panels."



“Thewizard1”’s info was a little less informative, however, but he managed quite successfully to transform an Autumn scene into a Winter scene...

He said *“The only thing I have mastered in life is how to spend money.”*



“Rtld614” posted some superb transformations, with rather more explanation...

“Here are a few I recently did using Adobe Firefly. All started with HO model locomotives. I start by removing the background of the photo of the model and then text what I want the background to be, season, time of day, scenery etc. I then have the AI create a watercolor, oil, color pencil, pencil sketch or whatever. I have made Holiday cards for the upcoming season. It has been great fun. I have also used it to create backdrops. I can change the color of a locomotive to see what a paint scheme will look like. It is amazing! You can also colorize black and white photos once you scan them. It is another great addition to the hobby. You can get an idea what a scene may look like that you may want to model. This hobby just gets better and better, Sound/DCC, 3D printing, AI May it never end! Greatest Hobby in the world.”





I particularly enjoyed “IronBeltKen”’s posts...

“Here’s my contribution. First, the raw source photo...”



"Then, some manually-edited photoshopping to hide the unfinished benchwork..."



"...and finally, the AI-generated watercolor rendition:"



I had been trying to work out how to take a screenshot of the MRH Magazine email (I never did work it out – I just ended up making a copy and saving it as a pdf), and was hunting through all the icons in the toolbar at the bottom of my computer screen. One,  on the far left, that I had never used or even looked at before, revealed that it was "Copilot" when I hovered the cursor over it. And, in amazement, I recognised that I had read a couple of the guys in the Forum mentioning that they had "used Copilot". Okay – let's see what this is all about... With much trepidation, I opened Copilot!



Copilot says “Nice to see you, Brian. How can I help you?” Okay! – so Copilot knows who I am!...??

I clicked on the “How can Copilot help you?” button.

“I can help you in a lot of ways, Brian. Think of me as your AI companion who’s built to boost your knowledge, creativity, and productivity. Here are some of the things I can do for you:”... and it listed a few options.

Under “**Knowledge & Discovery**”, one of the entries was...

- *“Share insights about your interests, like travel destinations, wildlife reserves, or even railway modeling.”*

What the heck? Copilot knows that I am interested in wildlife (I’d been looking at YouTube videos of the Nyarhi and Sand River Rustic Bush Camps in the Kruger Park on my computer), travel and model trains (well, the draft EMRIG newsletter is open on my computer, and I’d been looking on Google for a pic of a Heisler locomotive to add to BrianM’s article)!! It’s obviously been eavesdropping as I work on my computer!

Under “**Fun & Engagement**” she (gotta be a she!) explained to me...

“I’m not just about quick answers — I adapt to your style, remember what matters to you, and can guide you through both everyday tasks and big-picture goals.”

... And then she offered the following suggestion...

“Would you like me to show you a few examples tailored to your interests, like travel or railway modeling, so you can see how I’d help in action? (There’s that eavesdropping thing again!)

At the bottom of that opening page was a little disclaimer...

“Copilot is an AI and may make mistakes. Your [conversation activity](#), which includes content you share, now helps train AI.”

What have I let myself in for now? I clicked on “Let’s continue”, or something like that.

“Great — let’s make this fun and tailored to you, Brian. To kick things off, tell me what kind of subject sparks your curiosity right now. It could be something practical (like learning a new skill), intellectual (science, history, philosophy), creative (writing, art, music), or even adventurous (travel, wildlife, railways — I know you’re into those). (There we are again, always on about railways!!! 😊)

“For example:

- *If you say “**chemistry**”, I could walk you through the periodic table like a pro chemist.*
- *If you say “**wildlife reserves**”, I could teach you about ecosystems and animal behavior like a conservation expert.*
- *If you say “**railway modeling**”, I could guide you through track planning and layout design like a seasoned hobbyist.*

“So — what’s the topic you’d love to dive into today?”

Quite obviously, I then typed *Railway modelling* (yes, spelt with 2x Ls!) in the input box.



“Perfect choice, Brian — railway modelling is a fascinating blend of engineering, artistry, and storytelling. Let me guide you like a seasoned modeller would, starting with the essentials and then moving into more advanced techniques.” (Note – she’s now spelling “modelling” properly, with 2x Ls!! ☺)

What she then came up with was a very basic “Model Trains 101”!...

“The Foundations of Railway Modelling

- **Scales & Gauges:** *The first decision is size. Popular scales include:*
 - **HO scale (1:87)** — *the most common, balancing detail and space.*
 - **N scale (1:160)** — *smaller, great for fitting large layouts in limited space.*
 - **O scale (1:48)** — *larger, highly detailed, but requires more room.*

“Track Planning: *Think of your layout as a miniature world. Use software like **SCARM** (which I know you’re interested in) to design curves, sidings, and stations before laying track physically.”*

The only way that she would know that I was interested in SCARM would be that she had been eavesdropping on my email conversations with Mike Richardson, who had sent me a SCARM diagram of his Bushy Park layout. I had been unable to open his diagram, and had then started to look at getting SCARM for myself (but didn’t, in the end)!

“Building the Scene

- **Baseboard:** *A sturdy foundation is key. Plywood or foam boards are typical.*
- **Scenery:** *Add hills, rivers, tunnels, and towns. Materials like plaster cloth, foam, and static grass bring realism.*
- **Structures:** *Stations, bridges, and houses can be bought as kits or scratch-built for uniqueness.*

“Operations & Realism

- **Rolling Stock:** *Locomotives and carriages should match your chosen era or theme — steam, diesel, or modern electric.*
- **Electrics:** *Traditional DC control is simple, but **DCC (Digital Command Control)** lets you run multiple trains independently and add sound effects.*
- **Detailing:** *Weathering (adding rust, dirt, and wear) makes trains and scenery look authentic.*

“The Creative Side

Railway modelling isn’t just technical — it’s storytelling. Every layout tells a tale: a bustling industrial yard, a sleepy rural station, or a futuristic maglev line. You decide the narrative.

*“Now, to make this interactive: Would you like me to teach you **step-by-step how to design your first layout in SCARM**, or dive deeper into **advanced techniques like DCC wiring and weathering?**”*

I decided to stop at that point. This could go on ALL afternoon (and then some!), and I seriously need to get an article finished... we’re getting closer and closer to newsletter deadline time!

But then – perhaps I could ask Copilot to write / finish off this article for me....??? What if....??? ☺ ☺ ☺

So maybe next month I'll provide an AI-generated article... or even provide some AI-generated photos of my "finished" N Gauge layout!!!!.... Ha, ha, ha! Let's see where this little AI adventure leads!.....



Ummmm... tidy that up for me, please, Copilot?

So my stated request to Copilot was.... "Remove background clutter, and tidy up the layout, removing non-train-related items." It took a minute or so, and then Copilot came back to me...

"Here's your cleaned-up version, Brian — the layout now looks neat and focused entirely on the railway itself. All the workshop clutter and non-train items have been removed, leaving just the tracks, locomotives, rolling stock, and scenery elements. It really highlights the craftsmanship of your setup — the multiple loops, sidings, and structures stand out beautifully now. Would you like me to suggest some scenic enhancements next, like adding realistic foliage or lighting effects to bring the scene to life?" (Later!!)

WOW!!!! Not bad for a first attempt at using AI, I guess!... Copilot rotated my image through 180° to lose the bike and the gas bottles and potjies in the background, ignored the mountain and tunnel, squeezed things together a bit down on the right, chucked out the turntable and most of the buildings that I've painstakingly been acquiring, and a lot of those rail cars aren't mine (where's my Burlington Northern caboose gone?), but it's still kinda recognizable as my layout.... I'm gonna play some more..... 😊



I told Copilot to add the realistic foliage, and more industrial buildings...



"Here's your updated layout, Brian — now enriched with realistic foliage and a more industrial atmosphere. The greenery adds depth and life to the scene, while the new factories, silos, and warehouses give it that authentic railway-yard feel. It's starting to look like a bustling hub for freight operations! If you'd like, I can help you plan a lighting setup next — something that highlights the industrial zone at night with warm yard lights and cool tones for the foliage."

I decided to skip the lighting, and specify trains instead... "Please add a Burlington Northern freight train on the main line."



"Here's your updated layout, Brian — the Burlington Northern freight train now takes pride of place on the main line, led by two green-and-white locomotives hauling a mix of boxcars, hoppers, and tankers through the industrial zone. It adds a fantastic sense of motion and realism to the scene, perfectly complementing the factories and greenery. Would you like me to enhance the weathering next — giving the tracks, buildings, and rolling stock a more authentic, used look?"

Okay — time to call it a day! Not quite what I was hoping for, but I'm getting the picture! 😊😊 Tx, Copilot!

GOOD and BAD news for PRASA and Transnet

By Ray Leathern, 23-07-26

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the August 2026 edition of *On Track*, the newsletter of RSSA (The Railway Society of South Africa), and first appeared in July on www.thesouthafrican.com.

In the absence of further member-submitted articles relating to model trains this month, it's about time for some news again about the local prototype guys..... ☺

PRASA and Transnet might soon be sharing trips, because the former has no mainline passenger trains, while the latter is finally hauling freight again ...



PRASA and Transnet are facing tough futures, and the one solution might be sharing trips.

Image: File

South African railways' PRASA and Transnet are back in the headlines. The two state rail entities are chasing very different versions of a comeback. One is hauling coal again, to a good standard. And the other can't get a single mainline passenger train out of the yard.

As such, Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) is showing genuine signs of life since COVID. It railed **165 trains** to Richards Bay Coal Terminal last week (*that's in July 2026*) alone. That puts coal shipments on track for **65**



million tonnes (Mt) by the end of 2026. Better locomotive availability helped. So did sharper security, which has clamped down on the dreaded cable theft and vandalism, the twin diseases that have plagued it for years.

Transnet Freight Rail now ships more than **170Mt** a year. That's up from roughly **140Mt** in 2022. But it's still nowhere near the peak of **226Mt** hauled back in 2016. This was before years of underinvestment, theft and maintenance backlogs gutted the network and cost several executives their jobs.

PRASA AND TRANSNET

Coal, iron ore and general freight roughly split the annual tonnage three ways. The Department of Transport's (DOT's) Minister Barbara Creecy wants to see **250Mt** of total rail freight by 2029. Eleven private train operating companies are gearing up to help get there, some reportedly launching this year and in 2027.

Unfortunately, cable theft remains the villain of this story. PRASA and Transnet have a solution though: A long-term answer is in-cab and radio-based signalling. It leans on radio links between trains, and wayside systems instead of trackside cable. Doing so will leave thieves with far less copper worth stealing. And it should improve train safety at higher speeds, too.

GOING NOWHERE SLOWLY

A slow and steady return to form for Transnet lies in contrast to a dormant long-distance service for PRASA.

Meanwhile, PRASA mainlines are going nowhere slowly. Creecy confirmed recently there is currently no mainline long-distance passenger service running anywhere in the country. The DOT put out a Request for Information (RFI) back in August 2025, hunting for ways to re-launch three long-distance routes:

- Gauteng to Musina
- Gauteng to Durban
- Gauteng to Mbombela

Sadly, the proposals came back and they were so expensive, that flying the same routes would be cheaper. Creecy's problem is big: How do you make a train cheaper than a plane, when the entire process relies on a state subsidy just to survive? And the department says it wants another **R35 billion** from Treasury, via the Budget Facility for Infrastructure, to fix rail lines and signalling.

PRASA AND TRANSNET TO SHARE TRIPS?

The first and best option right now is for PRASA and Transnet to run mixed trains, cross-subsidising passenger carriages with freight revenue on the same lines. The lines, it's worth noting, belong to Transnet outright. Creecy says that to break-even, PRASA needs to complete **300-million** passenger journeys a year. **101 million** trips were recorded in the 2025/26 financial year. And the ambitious target is **600 million** by 2030/31, to match pre-pandemic passenger figures.

A team of UK experts is working out whether trains can run every **15 minutes** instead of hourly, using the infrastructure that already exists. More frequent trains mean better economies of scale, which is exactly what a subsidy-dependent service desperately need. Creecy has given herself until the end of this term of government, 2029 at the latest, to make it work ...

... and then here's some more news about local "big" trains (also from that same August 2026 On Track edition from RSSA)

Transnet Freight Rail

200 trains Transnet expected since 2014 nowhere to be found

Since 2014, South Africa's largest transport company – Transnet – was meant to receive more than 200 diesel locomotives worth billions from a Chinese supplier that never delivered them.

This came to light in Transport Minister Barbara Creecy's parliamentary response to MK Party MP Adil Nchabeleng's questions concerning the dispute between the supplier and Transnet.



The supplier, CNR Rolling Stock South Africa, now known as China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC SA Rolling Stock), is the South African subsidiary of Chinese manufacturer CRRC.

According to the minister, in March 2014, Transnet and CNR Rolling Stock South Africa concluded a Locomotive Supply Agreement for the design, manufacture, test and supply of 232 diesel locomotives. To date, the supplier has delivered only 22, or 9.5%, of the 232 diesel locomotives under the agreement, prompting Transnet to initiate legal proceedings against CRRC SA Rolling Stock.

Nchabeleng asked the minister about the relationship between CRRC and Transnet, including the existing joint projects and financial, technical, and operational commitments of each party.

In her response, Minister Creecy noted that currently no joint projects exist between the supplier and Transnet as a result of the non-delivery of more than 200 locomotives. "Given the serious irregularities identified in the review application, Transnet has not pursued any joint projects," she explained.

Creecy further explained that the review application identified significant irregularities in the procurement and contracting of the Locomotive Supply Agreement with CNR Rolling Stock South Africa.

She added that the supplier, CRRC SA Rolling Stock, has opposed the review application, and that Transnet's attempts at settling with the Chinese rolling stock and train manufacturer have been unsuccessful. This has forced the state-owned enterprise to investigate and initiate High Court proceedings against CRRC SA Rolling Stock.

An ongoing legal battle



The locomotives in question are the Class 45. (Photo by Jean Dulez)

In his questions to the minister, Nchabeleng sought further clarity surrounding the current outstanding issues in the dispute between the CRRC and Transnet. The MP questioned which contractual, financial and performance-related disagreements remain unresolved, as well as the steps by both parties to address the disputes.

Minister Creecy explained that in 2014 and 2015, Transnet made advance payments to CRRC SA Rolling Stock for the delivery of the locomotives. "Transnet is currently owed R1,350,563,130 (R1.35 billion) by CRRC SA Rolling Stock in respect of advance payments made where there was no associated delivery of locomotives," she clarified. *(Eish!!!)*

Regarding steps taken, the minister explained that Transnet and the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) jointly



instituted an application in the Gauteng Division of the High Court of South Africa on 9 March 2021. This was done to review and set aside the CNR Locomotive Supply Agreement, amongst other relief, due to the continued lack of engagement with CRRC SA Rolling Stock.

“The lack of engagement with CRRC SA Rolling Stock is justified given the litigation between Transnet and the SIU and the failure to settle the issues with CRRC SA Rolling Stock,” she said. “Transnet is protecting its rights through the litigation it has instituted in the High Court.”

Despite the ongoing dispute with CRRC SA Rolling Stock, Transnet’s operations continue, and new trains are being added to South Africa’s rail network all the time.

The Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) has taken delivery of more than 268 refurbished yellow train coaches to be deployed onto the rail network at any time.

The rail agency has also recovered all but five of its priority rail lines and is well on track to fully restore its network, with an eye on 600 million passenger trips by 2030/31.

Contact Details for Other Model Train Clubs in SA

Editor’s Note: *I was contacted by the editor of The Turntable, the newsletter of the Port Elizabeth Model Railroad Club, complimenting us on our most recent newsletter, and requesting a reciprocal arrangement of exchange of newsletters, and permission to make use of each other’s content, with appropriate credit given. I agreed to this arrangement, as I do already, on occasion, make use of material obtained from newsletters sent to me from other organisations such as The Railway Society of SA (RSSA), HRCASA, North Star Chronicle, etc., as you will have seen above.*

It occurred to me that we could, and should, be doing more to foster exchange of ideas and promotion of our hobby if we knew more about what the other model train clubs (and here I am including live-steam model trains) around the country are doing. To this end I have checked to see which of the other clubs have websites or a social media presence, and will in future be listing those contacts here, for anyone who may be interested in making use of them.

Centurion Society of Model Engineers (CSME) – Centurion, Gauteng

<https://www.centuriontrains.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Centurion-Society-of-Model-Engineers-100057468999643/>

Durban Society of Model Engineers (DSME) – Durban, KZN

<https://sites.google.com/view/dsmetrainscom>

<https://www.facebook.com/Kellawayhall/>



Eastern Model Railway Interest Group (EMRIG) – Benoni, Gauteng

emrig.co.za

<https://www.facebook.com/p/EMRIG-100070229143810/>

Gauteng Free-mo Group

Although **GFG** is now defunct, their old website (up to circa 2017) is still available on-line.

Old website = www.gfgsa.wordpress.com . Their subsequent website <http://gfgsa.co.za/#main> appears to have been discontinued.

Hornby Railway Collector's Association of South Africa (HRCASA) – Countrywide

<https://www.hrcasa.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/384124948979745/>

Knysna Model Railroaders (KMR) – Knysna, Western Cape

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/460444788336291>

Knysna Society of Model Engineers (KSME) – Knysna, Western Cape

KSME (at Rheenendal, near Knysna) does not appear to have either a website or social media presence, other than a mention on Totties Country Kitchen's Facebook page some 7 years ago. But apparently they do still exist, meeting on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month.

Marklin Club

The Marklin Club in South Africa does not appear to have a website or social media presence.

N Gauge Guild of South Africa – West Rand, Gauteng

<https://ngaugeguild.co.za/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1198818960758014>



Noord Transvaalse Model Trein Klub (NTMTK) – Pretoria , Gauteng

<https://modeltreinklub.co.za/vtm/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/848315080108069>

Outeniqua Railway Society – George, Western Cape

Does the Outeniqua Railway Society, which had and operated a layout at the Transnet (Outeniqua) Transport Museum in George, still exist? Is the layout still there? No website or current social media presence can be found.

Port Elizabeth Model Railroad Club (PEMRC) – Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape

PEMRC does not appear to have a website or social media presence. However, the PEMRC's newsletter "The Turntable" can be accessed via either of the links below:

[Club Newsletter archive on Calaméo for online reading](#)

[PEMRC Newsletters downloadable from Google Drive](#)

Pretoria Model Trainclub (PMT) – Pretoria, Gauteng

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

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/240318366660513/>

Rand Model Railway Club (RMRC) – Observatory, Johannesburg, Gauteng

RMRC does not appear to have a website or a social media presence.

Rand Society of Model Engineers (RSME) – Florida, Gauteng

<https://www.facebook.com/RandSocietyofModelEngineers/>

Saturday Afternoon Group (SAG) – Gauteng

SAG does not have a website or social media presence.



Western Province Model Railway Club (WPMRC) – Cape Town, Western Cape

<https://www.wpmrc.co.za/>

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=western%20province%20model%20railway%20club>

Westrand Free-mo Group (WFG) – Krugersdorp, Gauteng

WFG does not have a website or social media presence.

Gauteng Model Railroad History

7.(Sorry - Nothing ready yet this month).....

How It All Began For Me...

No story again this month

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), guest Michelle Lines-Dovey – from HRCASA (August 2025), Rene' Bosch (April 2026), Mervyn Mark (May 2026), and Paul Mollison (June 2026).

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 Pelser (Part 1)
- 2017 June Kobus Pelser (Part 2)
- 2017 July Kobus Pelser (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 Pelser (*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:-

- **Wednesday 23rd September** Set up EMRIG layout at Northmead Square (*)
- **Thursday 24th & Friday 25th Sept** Club train-running at Northmead Square (*)
- **Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th Sept** EMRIG train-running Event at Northmead Square (*)
- **Weekend 26th - 27th September** CSME Engineering Fair, Centurion
- **Saturday 3rd October** PMT Swap Meet, John Vorster Tech High School, Waverley, Pretoria
- **Friday 23rd October** Set up EMRIG layout for TGMTE
- **Weekend 24th - 25th October** The Great Model Train Expo, Wynand Marais Hall, Birchleigh (*)
- **Wednesday 4th November** Local Government Elections
- **Saturday 7th November** Richie's Toy Fair, Mosaic Church, Fairland (*)
- **Thurs 12th – Sat 14th November** Cherry Festival, Sandstone Estate
- **Saturday 28th November** EMRIG Swap Meet, Northmead Mall (*)
- **Saturday 12th December** PMT Swap Meet, John Vorster Tech High School, Waverley, Pretoria

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	mark@icemountain.co.za
Secretary – Duncan Hornby	info@emrig.co.za
Treasurer – Mia van Breda	finance@emrig.co.za
Webmaster – Glynn Chamberlain	glynn.chamberlain@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor – Brian Dawson	brian.dawson@iafrica.com
Publicity – Kobus Pelser	swapmeets@emrig.co.za
Swap Meet Manager – Kobus Pelser (assisted by James Job)	swapmeets@emrig.co.za

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 ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FEE FOR 2026 IS R240,00. MEMBERS JOINING DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WILL PAY ON A PRO-RATA BASIS.

A FAMILY MEMBERSHIP RATE DOES NO LONGER APPLY.

SO, IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, IT REALLY, SERIOUSLY, 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!!!