

Newsletter – OCTOBER 2026

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Chairman's Message – October 2026

By Mark Peddle

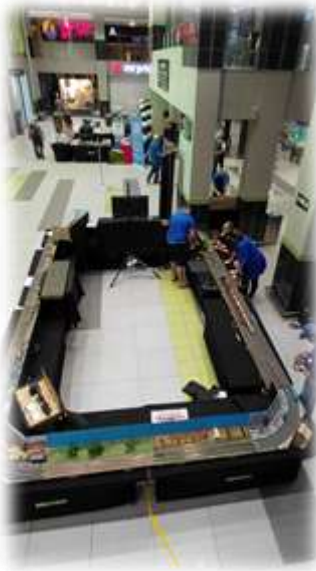
Dear Model Train Enthusiasts,

Well – September was a very busy month for the club. The club was invited by the Northmead Square mall to showcase model trains.

We spent a lot of time planning for the “ALL Aboard Model Train Show”, which EMRIG ran at the Northmead Square from 24th September to 27th September 2026.

A Wonderful Celebration of Model Railways at Northmead Square

There are times when a public exhibition exceeds expectations, not because of attendance figures or impressive displays alone, but because of the genuine connections made between people. The recent Model Train Show at Northmead Square was one of those occasions.



Some Scenes from the Show

Over the four-day event, visitors were drawn into the fascinating world of model railways through a combination of live train operations, detailed scenery, and the passion of the exhibitors who willingly shared their knowledge and experiences. The exhibition featured model train displays, hobby-related exhibits, and family activities, creating an engaging experience for visitors of all ages.



What made the event particularly rewarding was watching the public interact with the layouts. Children stood wide-eyed as trains navigated through miniature landscapes, while parents and grandparents often found themselves reminiscing about railway journeys from years gone by. Many visitors lingered far longer than expected, asking questions, photographing the displays, and discovering just how much creativity and craftsmanship goes into the hobby.



Club member Duncan Hornby's N Gauge Table Top layout, for something different

For EMRIG members, the show was about more than simply running trains. It was an opportunity to showcase a hobby that combines history, engineering, artistry, and friendship. The enthusiasm shown by visitors reminded us that model railways still have a unique ability to capture imaginations and bring generations together.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the exhibition was the number of people who expressed an interest in getting involved themselves. Many visitors were surprised to learn that railway modelling does not require a large room, extensive experience, or a significant financial investment to get started.



Camera train showing off its view of the track, thanks to Niel Wilson



Kiddies corner, with Sandy Arbuckle

Introducing the Mini Module Concept

A topic that generated considerable excitement throughout the show was the **Mini Module Concept**.

The idea is simple: instead of building a large home layout, a modeller creates a small, self-contained scene that can operate independently or connect with other modules to form a much larger exhibition layout. This approach makes the hobby more accessible while still allowing for creativity and realistic operation.



Visitors immediately recognised the advantages:

- Small enough to build and display in limited spaces.
- Affordable for newcomers entering the hobby.
- Easy to transport to club meetings and exhibitions.
- Allows individuals to contribute to larger club layouts.
- Encourages creativity through unique scenes and personal themes.

The Mini Module Concept was particularly appealing to younger enthusiasts, families, and those living in apartments or smaller homes. It demonstrated that anyone could become involved in railway modelling, regardless of available space or experience.

More importantly, it highlighted the spirit of collaboration that exists within the hobby. Each module tells its own story, but when joined together with others, they become part of something much larger, much like the club itself.



A Sincere Thank You

The success of the Model Train Show would not have been possible without the dedication of the exhibitors, volunteers, EMRIG members, and the support of Northmead Square. Most importantly, we thank every visitor who stopped to watch a train, ask a question, share a memory, or simply enjoy the experience.

Seeing young faces light up as trains passed by and hearing stories from visitors who once worked on or travelled by rail reminded us why we do what we do. Events like these are not only about displaying

models; they are about sharing a passion, preserving railway heritage, and inspiring future generations of railway modellers.

As we reflect on a highly successful exhibition, we look forward to building on this momentum, growing awareness of the hobby, and expanding initiatives such as the Mini Module Concept.

The journey continues, and we are delighted to have so many fellow travellers on board.



And then the Show came to an end...

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.



Advert and the Traders that took part



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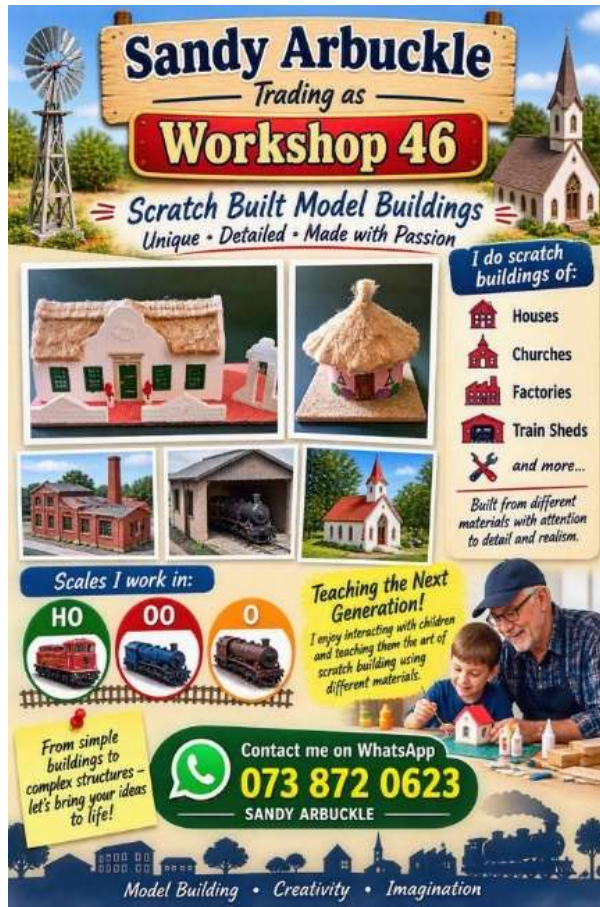
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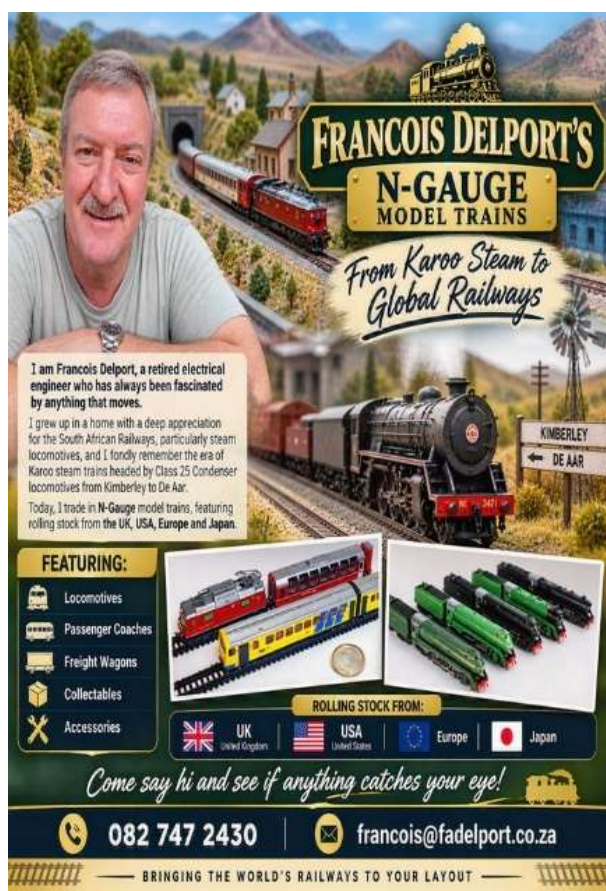


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From Karoo Steam to Global Railways

I am Francois Delpoit, a retired electrical engineer who has always been fascinated by anything that moves.

I grew up in a home with a deep appreciation for the South African Railways, particularly steam locomotives, and I fondly remember the era of Karoo steam trains headed by Class 25 Condenser locomotives from Kimberley to De Aar.

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

Warm regards,

All Aboard! 🚂

Mark Peddle

Chairman

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Other Club News

By Brian Dawson (Newsletter Editor)

All Aboard! - The Model Trains Event at Northmead Square!

And also something from my side.... ☺ The “**All Aboard! Model Trains Show**” took place at Northmead Square over the weekend Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th September.

A bit of confusion (and also a little unhappiness!) was caused by it initially being advertised as the “All Aboard! Model Train Expo”, with some people unfortunately then confusing it with Willie Vorster and Danie Pienaar’s “The Model Train Expo”, to be held in Birchleigh a month later, with some feeling that this event might detract from that Expo. However, we made a point of setting the record straight!!

After Sandy Arbuckle, a regular patron at the Northmead Square (NMS) coffee shop, had been overheard making some very complimentary remarks about EMRIG while there, EMRIG had been approached, some months back, by Kim, the Marketing Manager for the holding company that owns Northmead Square, asking us to make this event happen. She was now aware that we were a local (Benoni-based) model train club, became aware of the existence of our layout, and that we have been hosting quarterly swap meets at their rival Northmead Mall just down the road in Benoni for many years. She wanted to make something different, something special, happen at Northmead Square, and requested our involvement.

She wanted our layout there on display for a weekend, with us running trains all weekend, and also to have some model train traders present for the weekend, so that those who “discovered” model trains at the event would also be able to purchase items of interest.

When the weekend 26th and 27th September was agreed as the dates for the event, and with the Heritage Day public holiday falling on the prior Thursday 24th September, we grabbed the opportunity to set up the layout on Wednesday 23rd, and were then able to have club running sessions there on the Thursday and Friday, as well as the required Saturday and Sunday demonstration running as part of the event.

Due to the open space configuration at NMS, Niel proposed having just a simple rectangular layout, with no inverse curve included. The layout consisted of 17 straight modules provided by Ralph, Kobus, Terrence and Brian, in addition to the club’s corner modules and (just part of) the staging yard.





We were able to include a portion (three out of the six components) of the new staging yard, this time (first time!) using the 3-track in-layout configuration, rather than the much longer 5-track off-layout configuration that we had when running at the school. This meant that the yard length was shorter than before, and there were only the three staging tracks instead of five, but some additional sidings had been added, helping with train storage. The staging yard modules had also meantime been ballasted, with some minimalistic vegetation applied, and so they looked a little different to when we had used them last.



↑ 3-track in-layout staging yard

➔ Neil's bridge on display

Sorting out the track alignment once the layout had been assembled took a lot longer than usual, due to the different orientation of the staging yard, leaving out one of the centre modules, and the fact that all the previous alignment adjustments had been disturbed during the ballasting operations, as well as the new track that had been laid. But Niel, James and Mark persevered until quite late on the Wednesday evening to get everything operating properly, so that trains could be run from the Thursday morning. Thanks, guys!

Neil Plumbly's very attractive trestle bridge module was set up as a separate diorama, on prominent display, and attracted a lot of attention (including a number of requests as to whether it was for sale!), due to its rather unique character and superb workmanship.

To increase the visual attraction of our overall display, we also had a TV screen on which prototype train videos were playing, and then a separate TV screen on which the cab-view camera projection from Niel's camera train was screened. This latter screen created a lot of excitement among some of the younger kids, who could see themselves "on TV", waving to the train as it came towards them, due to a few seconds delay between the recording and the projection. Niel's "demo" sample module, as well as one of the unused portions of the staging yard, were also set out on display, as props to assist us when explaining the composition and assembly of the layout to interested members of the public.



↑ The TV screen with the projected video from the camera-train, with Ralph's Can-Nat Station (left) and Richie's Diner (right) modules visible below, and Neil Plumbly's bridge diorama displayed on the right



To complement the HO layout, Duncan also brought along his portable coffee-table-top N scale layout, and this was also set up, with trains running, on view for each of the days that we were running trains. Francois Delport also brought his portable N scale layout, which was set up next to his trader tables, for the Saturday and Sunday.

← Duncan's portable N scale layout

There would only be space for a limited number of trader tables in the mall concourse. Bearing in mind that those traders would need to be there and keep trading for the whole of the Saturday and Sunday (unlike a traditional Swap Meet Saturday, where trading is for just three hours), we approached a few selected traders. Barbara and JJ from Jabaville with their very wide range of railway-related items, Len Swanepoel and his brother Toppie with their superb buildings and trees, Francois Delport with his big selection of N Gauge trains, and Neil Plumbly and Andrew Mabin (Mini-Models) with their range of secondhand trains, were there. An additional attraction would be having Sandy Arbuckle there, making scratch-built buildings, demonstrating to the kids (and their parents!) how to do this, in addition to having ready-built structures on sale.



Kids busy colouring building shapes to be cut out and assembled, at Sandy's work station

Mark had set up a roster, based on those members offering their services, to ensure that there were trains running at all times, and a number of the club members availed themselves of the opportunity, and came and ran trains over the course of the four days. Trains were running at all times from 09h00 to 17h00 on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and then 09h00 to 15h00 on the Sunday (after which we started dismantling the layout). Club members were quite distinctive, wearing their club shirts!



Once again, like at The Hobby Show, we encouraged kids to run our trains on the layout, either using Engine Driver on cellphones or tablets, or else using the simpler UT4 controllers.



During the course of the longweekend we also made every effort to promote Willie and Danie's Model Train Expo at Birchleigh, with Willie's large poster on display from Wednesday afternoon, and their fliers available on our layout and at the traders' tables. We told all those that we interacted with about the Expo, recommending that they attend, as there would be even more layouts and trains on display there, and more traders in attendance. Willie and Danie both popped in to say hello and see what we were up to.

Kim had been very keen to get all the local schools involved, envisaging inter-school competitions, perhaps the schools even building and decorating modules. However, with the event taking place on a weekend that fell within the government school holidays, this was not really practical. However, the event had been widely advertised at all the local schools, through their marketing and information-dissemination groups, and there was a really good turnout and attendance by kids who had not gone away for the holidays.



Northmead Square bent over backwards to accommodate us, providing the tables and table cloths, chairs, as well as a prize for which all visitors making purchases of R250 or more at the traders went into the draw. They provided the use of one of the TVs, and also two empty shops close by, where the traders could store their goods overnight, and we could store layout items that were too easily "removable", taking them off the layout each evening and putting them back each morning. They also provided a security officer to keep watch over the layout after 17h00 when we were not around.

With the event having been advertised and promoted in the local press, as well as at the schools, on our and NMS's Facebook pages, and to all our Gauteng model train contacts, turnout over the course of the weekend was pretty fantastic, with most visitors to the mall stopping off on their way in to at least have a look at the layout, many of them asking questions, some (*like the young lady in the middle in the pic below*) even coming back for repeat visits, bringing other family members or friends with them.



Mark and Niel put a lot of effort into all the arrangements that had to happen beforehand, so that this event could take place – initial visits to the mall to check suitability of the space available to us; numerous phone calls and meetings with Kim; designing the layout; arrangements with the traders; arranging promotional adverts for each of the traders who didn't already have such; preparing and placing the social media promotions, and marketing at the schools; and motivating the club to be part of it all!

But this event certainly served its purpose, definitely promoting model trains as a hobby to the East Rand community at large, as well as drawing additional feet to Northmead Square, as Kim had hoped would be the case. The local coffee shop, at least, certainly seemed to benefit from our being there! ☺



Team photo taken on Sunday afternoon, once all the packing up was done

Mini-modules Updates

Niel and James have re-laid a few track sections on the staging yard modules, and have also added in a couple of extra points and four sidings, to provide some extra “parking space” in the yard. This had all been done by the end of August. Adding point motors (which are to be mounted on the underside of the modules) is their next project, which will go ahead as soon as approval of the quotation for this additional cost has been given.

Meanwhile, Brian has ballasted the staging yard modules, and also done some basic vegetating of the bare areas where scenic development is unlikely to be occurring. We now need to decide what’s to happen on the broad bare areas of the two outer ladder module sets... There’s an opportunity for someone to do some scenicking (so they don’t just remain “site under construction”)! ☺ I guess next up will be the ballasting of the Chicken Wing and the Banana Branch (not yet done)... And then we can head off into branchlines somewhere...!



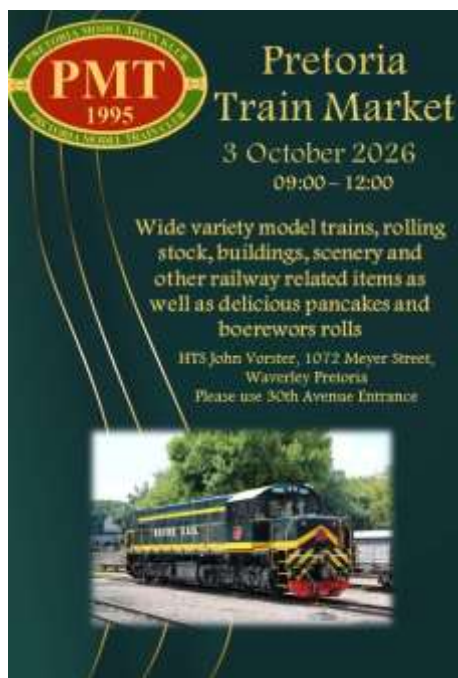
Ballasting of the staging yard is completed (including the other two bigger modules not shown here)

Progress with module development by other members:

Terrence is the one member most active in this regard, but also not making much notable progress just yet. But he’s slowly getting on with things, and one of these days there will be meaningful progress to report!

Richard Mustoe has meanwhile sold his set of four modules – to someone who is not an EMRIG member! Now we’ll just have to wait and see whether the new owner is keen to join in with us when next we assemble a big layout, or whether we’re perhaps going to have a “rival” layout being set up elsewhere (other than in Knysna ☺) Watch this space! ☺ ☺ ☺

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



There was no Swap Meet as such in September. The closest thing to a Swap Meet was having the five trader groups joining us at Northmead Square for the Model Train Show, as described above.

Feedback from those traders was that sales and turnover had not been as high as we / they had hoped, more than likely due to having a completely different “clientele” in attendance, and not the dedicated model train fraternity who routinely pitch up for the regular Swap Meets. Some of the traders reported, however, that it had still been worth their while to participate.

With apologies to PMT, this newsletter was intended for publication BEFORE their 3rd October swap meet.....!! ☹ Updated....

The next proper Swap Meet ~~will be~~ was the one hosted by the **Pretoria Model Trainclub (PMT)**, taking place **on Saturday 3rd October** (their advert is alongside ←), where there ~~will be~~ were far more traders in attendance, and hopefully more buyers, with

money in their pockets or available on their credit cards.

And for those who are so keen on the pancakes, you can rest assured that PMT, with their wonderful catering team, ~~will did!!~~, as per their tradition, have pancakes for you, in addition to their usual delicious boerie rolls, cold drinks and beverages. *Some EMRIG members and other friends were there, and confirmed that this **was** the case!* ☺ ☺ ☺ Feedback on the PMT Swap Meet will be covered next month.

So, then, your next opportunity to “buy stuff” will be at Willie and Danie’s **Model Train Expo in Birchleigh on 24th and 25th October**. Although not actually billed as a “Swap Meet”, many of the regular Swap Meet traders, as well as other suppliers, will be there, with great bargains on offer once again.

Our next (EMRIG) Swap Meet, at the end of **November (Saturday 28th)**, will be held at Northmead Mall. All we know at this stage is that NMM management is planning something “a little different” for that weekend. They’ve told us we will have additional space for setting up, and so there will be place for lots of traders, and also for us to set up a bigger layout than we have had there previously. Sadly, we will not be able to have EMRIG boerie rolls (or pancakes!) on sale, but it’s quite likely that Pick ‘n Pay will have their delicious boerie rolls available again. I wonder if they can also do pancakes????..... ☺

The **Swap Meets calendar for what remains of 2026** is thus as follows:

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*

Then here's another reminder that **The Great Model Train Expo 2026** will be taking place in Birchleigh on the weekend **24th – 25th October 2026**. (Here's Willie's advert once again →)

And the last **Richie's Toy Fair** of the year will now be held on **Saturday 14th November**, at the Mosaiek Church in Fairland.

Note that this date has changed from what was originally announced!! (Was going to be on the 7th, then provisionally moved to 28th [and would have clashed with our swap meet], but is now confirmed [and advertised on Facebook] as being held on 14th November.)

Scheduled EMRIG Layout Set-ups And Future Activities

First up, we will be back at the **Great Model Train Expo** on **24th and 25th October** this year, where we will have a similar display area, and thus likely a similar layout size, to what we had there last year. Niel might have to do some juggling, to see what all he can fit into the available space, but hopefully this will include the staging yard (or at least part of it) and a bridge or two. Will be great to show off the newer elements of the layout not displayed there before!

Then, following our recent event at Northmead Square, we have been approached by **Ridgewood Private School** in Benoni, asking if we would please set up a layout (even if it's just a small one) at their **Robotics event** (to be held at their school) on **Saturday 31st October**. We will have just about recovered from the TGMTE expo the weekend before, but the current idea is to help them out with a small layout (four curves and a few straights), as this is exactly the kind of interest that we were hoping to stimulate through our participation in the show at NMS. It's about taking the layout (and promoting our hobby) to school kids who are really interested in the technical stuff, where there is likely to be a genuine interest in the technical aspects of the layout and of digital train control and operation, and not just "ooh, ah, look how pretty it looks"! James and Niel will be taking their homemade control systems, so that the kids can see what can be made, and achieved, using technical stuff and programmes with which they will be familiar.

We're waiting for confirmation as to whether we're invited back to the last of the **Richie's Toy Fairs** for 2026, now happening on **14th November**. If we go, that one too will be a small layout, because of the limited space available to us there. Once again we would most probably include the newer layout elements (but sadly without space for the staging yard).

Just two weeks after Richie's Toy Fair, we have our **EMRIG Swap Meet** at **Northmead Mall** on **28th November**, where we are planning to have a "somewhat bigger than our usual swap meet" sized layout. We're still awaiting confirmation of NMM's planning for the event, and thus how much space will be available to us, but we'll definitely have a layout there!

That would mean October and November are going to be pretty busy months for us as a club, as well!





I wonder if we would contemplate doing anything in December (back at the school?), or if we'll just take a break, and catch our breath before the new year begins.....? Watch this space... ☺

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.... ☹

EMRIG Operations Sessions Part 1. Initial Session Design

Some suggestions by Ralph Davey

Editor's Note: *Ralph spent a lot of time wandering around the expanded layout when it was last set up at Benoni Junior School in July, looking at things, thinking about things, and making notes. A short while later he produced this document, where he is proposing an innovative way of running Operations on the layout, instead of just running trains round and round. Please read through this proposed scheme carefully, and imagine how it could happen, and then please provide us with your feedback.*

EMRIG Operations are an easy activity, designed to add further enjoyment to running on the club layout when the expanded layout is set up. The aim is to add interest for an hour or two during a running session, with no pressure to meet deadlines or race to get finished.

This is a “first pass” design, and we can enhance and improve the operations as we run and learn. As we test and try out the sessions, we will improve and refine the running. If it is seen that a task needs to be dropped or falls away, that's fine.... all part of the learning and growth experience.

These activities can also be incorporated into a home layout to add more enjoyment and activities when running trains.

Using a Google Dice as a “scenario changer”, the operators would run the trains or manage the movements of the trains, and other members will be in control of the stations and yards as despatchers and controllers. A possible roving despatcher will be used to act as overall controller and director, applying change movements if needed. Who is to roll the dice is a learning curve we will test and improve. Initially it may be the despatchers.

(Note to rivet counters: The term “dice” is used as it depicts the common known name. In the singular form it should actually be referred to as a “die” in English language structures, but in common practice it is referred to as a dice.)

Operations Activities:

Trains are not theme or line based. Operators run their trains for the type of operation selected.

Two shifts of up to one hour each are carried out. Operators decide on the type of train to be run. Each operator will be subject to changes in the run, during the course of the session, dictated by the roll of the dice. As the layout is set in its size and composition, the runs will continue as circuits, and as each change is presented, so the required activity is to be carried out.

Each train will have one or two assigned scheduled tasks. This is to keep the process easy and simple in design.

The operations cards are set up for one train per type per session as is shown. So operators decide on the train to be run, and the coaches / wagons to be collected and dropped-off are then set out accordingly before the session.

Operations Guidelines:

Train operators will walk around the layout, following their train. Operators need to monitor the line and the view ahead at all times.



Operators will request permission to move through the staging and station yards.

When signalling is operational, the flow will be governed by the signalling settings as well.

When shunting / switching is being carried out, the other train movements will be routed around the train performing this activity, on cross-over point structures wherever possible.

If there is no loop or passing option, the waiting train/s will be held in position until it is safe to pass. If the train performing the shunting / switch activity can move off the main line, it will do so.

Track Designation:

The running sessions will operate on the two main lines. Running is left-hand based. The allocation is left hand (inner track) is M1, and right hand (outer track) is M2.

With the need to move and cross over tracks, this will be done in a controlled way, and after the move or activity the train needs to be routed back to its mainline designated track.

Operational Train Types:

1. *Passenger Train*
Departs station and runs circuits and performs stops as assigned.
Operator performs tasks as presented in the dice roll.
2. *Freight / Goods Train*
Departs from yard. Train will drop off and pick up wagons / cars at designated sidings.
Changes and tasks will be applied as they arise.
3. *Engine Movement*
Engine movements are either additional activities or scheduled.
4. *Unit or single commodity train*
Ore, Petro-Chemical, Coal or Container as examples.
5. *Suburban Passenger Train*
Runs and stops at all stations.
6. *Mixed passenger and freight*
Local freight with passenger coaches added.
7. *Other Trains*
Maintenance of Way (MOW), Crane train, Repair train, Parcels train are examples.
8. *Back up engines*
If needed, the operator will still need to roll the dice and comply with outcomes and running procedures.

Operations Dynamics:

The operator will get the proposed departure time and clearance for the train from the despatcher.

At the start of the departure the dice roll is initiated. The dice roll values are noted.

During the session, each operator will roll the dice twice (or up to four times, if time allows). Say every 15 minutes, or at the completion of a task. Dice results determine if there is a change to the movement or activities.

During the initial sessions, all dice rolls will be carried out in a yard or station structure. So for a freight / goods train, on completion of a car / wagon drop off or pick up, the train moves to the next station or yard



as determined, and then the next dice roll is carried out.

Some trains will just do circuits, and add to the traffic flow. They only stop as scheduled or directed. Examples are unit or passenger trains. However, the outcomes of dice rolls still apply, and will be carried out for these trains as well.

On completion of the session, the train is parked at its original starting track position.

The despatcher / controller at the yard / stations is the key and final authority for the movements.

Dice outcomes:

Departure sequence dice roll.

Drivers roll the dice. Lowest number is assigned the first departure slot. The others follow in order of the dice value rolled. Duplicate values require that the dice be rolled again for the duplicate throw. Despatchers can confirm sequence of departure.

Dice Roll One: Departure Outcomes for value 1 to 6 as follows.

1. Cleared to leave. Despatcher will align and confirm departure. Continue with scheduled movement.
2. Wagon/coach numbers two to five in the consist are not releasing brakes. Train departure is moved to the last position for this departure sequence.
3. Engine not responding. Roll the dice again in five minutes. If the number rolled is 3 or below, it is still an issue. If the number rolled is 4 to 6 the train can continue. Despatcher will confirm departure. Repeat for two throws. After second throw, problem is cleared and the train can depart after despatcher confirmation.
4. Cleared to leave. Despatcher will align and confirm departure. Continue with scheduled movement.
5. Despatcher notes one or two additional coaches/wagons to be added from the sidings. Add these before departing.
6. Cleared to leave. Despatcher will align and confirm departure. Continue with scheduled movement.

Dice Roll Two: Freight/goods train value of roll number outcomes.

1. Continue with scheduled movement.
2. Wagon pick-up number 2 has been cancelled. Continue to next shunt/switch move.
3. Wagon number three in the consist is bad ordered. It must be taken off the train at the yard.
4. If running a goods/freight train, collect the allocated wagon at assigned siding.
5. Engine failure. One or only engine is bad ordered with problems. Allocate a relief engine and collect the train.
6. Crew hours expired. Train on hold. Allocate a crew member from the second shift to continue the run.

Dice Roll Two: Passenger train value of roll number outcomes.

1. Continue with scheduled movement.
2. The next station stop has been cancelled. Continue to follow-on station and stop there. Inform the despatcher at the next station the train will not be stopping this time, and is continuing to the following station.
3. Coach number three in the consist is bad ordered. It must be taken off the train at the yard.

4. Engine failure. One or only engine is bad ordered with problems. Allocate a relief engine and collect the train.
5. Crew hours expired. Train on hold. Allocate a crew member from the second shift or on standby to continue the run.
6. Delays in connecting passenger activities at Niel's Yard Station require a hold on movements. Move to Hyena Drift sidings and hold up there while waiting for clearance. The despatcher at Niel's Yard Station will update you when to continue.

Dice Roll Two: Suburban train value of roll number outcomes.

1. Continue with scheduled movement.
2. The next station stop has been cancelled. Continue to follow-on station and stop there. Inform the despatcher at the next station the train will not be stopping this time, and is continuing to the following station.
3. Delays in connecting passenger activities at Niel's Yard Station require a hold on movements. Move to Hyena Drift sidings and hold up there while waiting for clearance. The despatcher at Niel's Yard Station will update you when to continue.
4. Unruly passengers force the train to hold for 10 minutes. Continue thereafter.
5. Second coach brake issue. Coach is removed from the train and placed in a siding. Yard engine may help with this task.
6. Driver replacement due to health issues. Request standby driver to assist if available.

Repeat Dice Roll Two for duration of the session. Going forward, further options will be added.

Session preparation:

Confirm trains to run.

Agree on time duration for the session.

Relief engines to be located in yard or sidings.

Place cars and wagons per coupler type in collection sidings. Two of each where space allows.

Place two additional coaches in yard extension sidings for add-on per dice roll #5 on start.

Passenger coach for collection at station or allocated siding.

Standby crew and engine identified.

Second shift set up if there is to be one (maybe optimistic at this stage....)



Niel's Yard Station

Train Operation Card 1 – Passenger Train A.

Passenger train departs Niel's Yard Station on M1.

Include a baggage or freight coach as last coach for drop off at Terrence's Farm for milk collection.

Depart when scheduled and confirmed by despatcher.

Carry out circuit running. Other train traffic will determine / impact progress.

At the approximate midway mark of the full run, drop off last coach at Terrence's Farm and pick up coach if there is one in the siding.

Scheduled stops are:

Three Sisters at around the 10 minute run time mark. Stop is for five to ten minutes.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Niel's Yard Station at around the 20 minute run time mark. Stop is for five to ten minutes.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Continue with circuits amongst traffic. Despatchers may redirect the train at the stations and yard as required.

Final stop is at start station at session end.



Terrence's Farm – milk stop

Train Operation Card 2 – Passenger Train B.

Passenger train departs Niel's Yard Station on M2.

Include two out-of-service coaches going for overhaul, for drop off at Spaghetti Junction at around the 20 minute time mark. The despatcher will assign the siding to be used.

Depart when scheduled and confirmed by despatcher.

Carry out circuit running. Other train traffic will determine / impact progress.

Scheduled stops are:

Three Sisters at around the 5 minute run time mark. Stop is for five to ten minutes. **(Note:** inform despatcher to route train onto M1 for this stop for platform alignment. Departure then needs to be routed back to M2).

Roll dice for next instruction.

Niel's Yard Station at around the 15 minute run time mark. Stop is for five to ten minutes.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Continue with circuits amongst traffic. Despatchers may redirect the train at the stations and yard as required.

At the approximate 20 minute time mark of the full run, drop off the out-of-service coaches at Spaghetti Junction (staging yard).

Final stop is at start station at session end.



Three Sisters Station

Train Operation Card 3 – Goods Train C.

Goods train departs Spaghetti Junction for track M1.

The despatcher will assign the siding to be used.

This train will shunt / switch collections and drop off at Brian's Building Supplies and Terrence Industry sidings.

Depart when scheduled and confirmed by despatcher.

Carry out circuit running. Other train traffic will determine / impact progress.

At the approximate 5 minute time mark of the full run, drop off and collect wagons at Brian's Building Supplies.

At the approximate 15 minute time mark of the full run, stop at Spaghetti Junction.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Depart at 20 minute time mark, and drop and collect cars at Terrence Industry sidings.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Continue with circuits amongst traffic. Despatchers may redirect the train at the stations and yard as required.

Final stop is at start yard at session end.



Brian's Building Supplies siding



Terrence Industry Siding

Train Operation Card 4 – Goods Train D.

Goods train departs Spaghetti Junction for track M2.

The despatcher will assign the siding to be used.

This train will shunt / switch collections and drop off at Hyena Drift and Terrence cross-over sidings.

Depart when scheduled and confirmed by despatcher.

Carry out circuit running. Other train traffic will determine / impact progress.

At the approximate 10 minute time mark of the full run, drop off and collect wagons at Hyena Drift.

At the approximate 15 minute time mark of the full run, stop at Spaghetti Junction.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Depart at 20 minute time mark, and drop and collect cars at Terrence cross-over sidings.

Travel to Niel's Yard Station.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Continue with circuits amongst traffic. Despatchers may redirect the train at the stations and yard as required.

Final stop at start yard at session end.



Ralph's Hyena Drift sidings

Train Operation Card 5 – Unit Petro-Chemical Train E.

Goods train departs Spaghetti Junction for track M1.

The despatcher will assign the siding to be used.

This train will shunt / switch collections and drop off at Hyena Drift Petroleum.

Depart when scheduled and confirmed by despatcher.

Carry out circuit running. Other train traffic will determine / impact progress.

At the approximate 10 minute time mark of the full run, stop at Spaghetti Junction.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Depart at 15 minute time mark.

At the approximate 20 minute time mark of the full run, drop off and collect tanker wagons at Hyena Drift.

Continue with circuits amongst traffic. Despatchers may redirect the train at the stations and yard as required.

Final stop at start yard at session end.



Ralph's Hyena Drift Petroleum siding

Train Operation Card 6 – Freight Train F.

Goods train departs Spaghetti Junction for track M1.

The despatcher will assign the siding to be used.

This train will shunt / switch collections and drop off at Colin's Ruppertsheim siding and Hyena Drift.

Depart when scheduled and confirmed by despatcher.

Carry out circuit running. Other train traffic will determine / impact progress.

At the approximate 10 minute time mark of the full run, stop at Spaghetti Junction.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Depart at 15 minute time mark and proceed to Colin's siding and drop off and collect wagons.

At the approximate 20 minute time mark of the full run, drop off and collect wagons at Hyena Drift.

Continue with circuits amongst traffic. Despatchers may redirect the train at the stations and yard as required.

Final stop at start yard at session end.



Colin's Ruppertsheim siding

Train Operation Card 7 – Suburban Passenger Train G.

Suburban Passenger train departs Niel's Yard Station for track M2.

The despatcher will assign the siding to be used.

This train will run and stop on each circuit at Niel's Yard Station, Spaghetti Junction Station, and Three Sisters.

Depart when scheduled and confirmed by despatcher.

Carry out circuit running. Other train traffic will determine / impact progress.

At the approximate 10 minute time mark of the full run, stop at Spaghetti Junction.

Roll dice for next instruction.

At the approximate 20 minute time mark of the full run, stop at Niel's Yard Station.

Roll dice for next instruction.

Continue with circuits amongst traffic. Despatchers may redirect the train at the stations and yard as required.

Final stop at start station at session end.



Spaghetti Junction Station?

Despatcher Notes:

Trains may need to be moved into sidings as traffic meets up.

Passenger trains have priority movements.

Despatchers control all movements.

Ballasting The EMRIG Layout Staging Yard

By Brian Dawson

Having not been around, or able to be involved with the building of the club's staging yard modules, nor having donated items towards the staging yard project, I felt that I really ought to make some or other contribution (especially seeing that Niel had already included my name on the "built by" name-plate on one of the modules!) (when I queried this, he kindly said that my contribution had been "writing about it" ...).

Having the staging yard in place as a part of the layout at Benoni Junior School in July made a massive difference to the layout and its operation... but the bareness and barrenness of the yard was evident, and in stark contrast to the detailed scenicking of the rest of the layout. Yes – we placed a few loose structures here and there, to break up that bareness, and added my loose "site under construction" diorama, to give a "partially scenicked" feel to the yard-entry and -exit modules. But the absence of ballasting on the yard tracks was still very noticeable.



I decided to offer my services with regard to the ballasting of the yard. I'm certainly not the world's greatest ballaster, having only learnt from Jason McBean how to do a bit of ballasting when I started landscaping my modules for GFG back in 2018 after Jason had built them for me, and then Jason subsequently let me do a bit of ballasting on his layout when I was spending my Fridays at his place, assisting him, or running trains, on his layout. But I thought I should be able to do a decent job... (... and hope that's been the case).



Ballasting done on my GFG "Overpass" curve module (L), and Jason's layout (R)

Of course, I had meantime ballasted my own EMRIG modules a couple of years ago (yip – two years ago!), and that seemed to have come out alright, but my “big” ballasting projects more recently were the ballasting of much of the WFG Expo layout that we developed for TGMTE 2025, and then the ballasting of the Tri-State Power coal yard that I had been developing just before we had to shut up shop at Chamdor and put all the modules into storage in June 2022. Tri-State Power was not one of the modules incorporated into the initial WFG “Lapa layout” at Dave Flockhart’s place, and so it remained in storage for a few years. But now that we are in the process of developing a second WFG layout, in Dave’s shed, there was space to include Tri-State Power, and so it had been brought out of storage this year, and incorporated into the layout. But, like the EMRIG staging yard, it was then still unballasted, although the rest of the scenicking had been done while at Chamdor.



Ballasting on my English Small Town EMRIG modules



Ballasting done in 2025 on the WFG Expo layout



Tri-State Power at Chamdor, left unballasted in 2022

Tri-State Power yard being ballasted, 2026

Niel brought the staging yard modules through to the 29th August Swap Meet at Benoni Junior School for me, we transferred them to my car, and I took them home, stopping off at @Trainz on my way, to buy what I hoped would be sufficient ballast (5 packets of the MSP “N Scale” ballast that Rene’ gets from Model Scenics in the Cape) (I still had a couple of packets left over after doing Tri-State). Only once at home, and checking things out, I realised that Chicken Wing and Banana Branch weren’t included among the modules. Oh well, they can be part of another phase... I offloaded everything into the garage.

The first issue that I had to deal with was – where will I do this job? Ballasting of my EMRIG modules had been done at home, working on the dining room table (covered with a towel) whenever my wife was away looking after our granddaughter. But dealing with those four little modules over the space of a month or so had been relatively simple, quick and easy, and I could get everything tidied up and packed away out of sight before she got back home and could see what I had been up to. The staging modules were bigger, with far more track to ballast, and would take considerably longer. There was no way I could “occupy” the dining room table or a kitchen counter for that long!

As the workbench in my garage is *de facto* more of a storage area, and the desk in my study is similarly cluttered, the answer was to set up a new workspace in the study. I brought in a small folding slatted table, and set it up on top of a camping wash-up bowl stand... Nope, still too low! I prefer to work (ballasting, at least) standing up, with the modules at about 1,2m off the ground (that was the layout height at Jason’s, at Chamdor, and at WFG, and it works comfortably). So I brought a couple of empty A4 Typek paper boxes in from the garage (I’m an avid collector of empty boxes, knowing they will always come in handy, sooner or later!), placed those on top of the table, placed the first module on top of them, and then had the module at a reasonable height to work at. Now I would also have a view of the flowering Yesterday, Today and

Tomorrow in the garden to rest my eyes, whenever I looked up! Not a pretty arrangement – but functional! And also out of my wife’s way (although she muttered every time she tried to get the ironing off the rack that I was partially obscuring) ☺. But it’s MY study...! And then finding space on my desk for all the “stuff” I needed to work with was another issue....

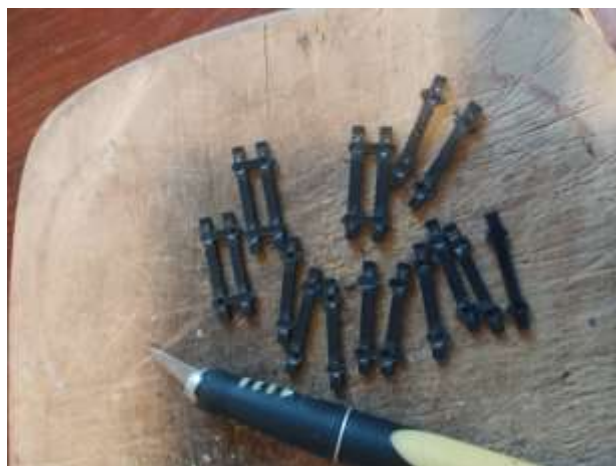


The staging yard elements have been permanently bolted together in sections as long as they need to be! So they are not simple 500mm x 300mm individual modules. Two of them are 1m long (“double” modules), and standard 300m wide. These have five tracks on them. The other four are 1,25m long, two of them the standard 300mm wide, while the other two are wider (400mm).

Five of the six modules were still the “natural”, rather pale brown MDF colour, while one had mostly been painted grey. I wanted all of them to have a fairly uniform “earth brown” as an underlying colour, so that the “ground” would show through wherever there was no ballast or where the later vegetation cover might be a bit thin or non-existent. I found that a mix of acrylic Vandyke Brown (primarily), mixed with a bit of Burnt Umber, gave me the kind of colour I was looking for. All of the modules were first painted with this undercoat, although, as I worked on just one module at a time, there might be a bit of inconsistent variability in my progressive brown “mixes”.



Next task on the list was to fill in all missing sleepers / ties. Spaces were evident where rail sections were joined with fishplates, and where points had been connected in. I stripped sleepers off a piece of old track that I had lying around. The painful part of this job is trimming off the clips (the rail anchors/ fasteners) that hold the track on the sleepers, and trying to scoop out / shave off a bit of the sleeper height where it will lie under the fishplates, so that the track is not lifted at that position. This is all done with a Xacto knife blade (cutting away from oneself!), while holding the sleeper in place by pressing down firmly on the other end of the sleeper (and the rail anchors that have not yet been cut away!). A bit *eina*...!



While painting the module surface, I noticed that, in some areas on the “ladder” modules, there was either no track bed under the track (on the curved bits, where the extra sidings had been added in), or else that the provided track bed did not fully cover the width of the points. I like to have a little triangular “filler” in the angle where the point tracks diverge, as this helps to save a bit of ballast. I needed first to fill in all these “missing” bits. I happened to have a roll of 3mm thick x 25mm wide cork underlay, bought from one of the traders at a swap meet a while ago. This worked perfectly for all the bits I needed to fill in, when cut to shape (being the same thickness as the provided track bed).



I also like to provide a “concrete slab” structure under the point changer mechanism, so that these are not left suspended in mid-air, where they might be susceptible to damage. Once again, I used the 3mm cork, cutting it to a suitable size and shape, painting the top surface and sides with “concrete” acrylic paint, painting a bit of cold glue on the underside, and then sliding it into position under the mechanism. (I worked out this better sequence, after first gluing the raw cork in place and THEN painting it, and having to

go back afterwards to paint brown again over my “concrete” mess on the “ground”, from trying to paint the sides while *in situ*.) *Concrete painting mess evident →*

I spent a while thinking about how to deal with the “track-end treatment” issue, ensuring that we retain the flexibility that we need at each track-end, in order to be able to deal with the track re-alignment issues that arise whenever we set up the layout, due to having different configurations each time. The more often we set up the layout, the more I have realised just how critical this track-end flexibility is.



Different club members have tried different approaches, wanting their modules to “look ballasted” right up to the end. In some cases, ballast was applied normally over the track-end, once the track-end had been fastened down, trusting that the track-end is correctly positioned, and that all other modules will be equally perfect, and everything will line up. Sadly, this is seldom the case, and is a major alignment problem!



Another approach (suggested by Ralph) was to apply printed ballast paper under the track-ends. This is what he and I did on our modules. Unfortunately the printed ballast paper seldom looks the same as the ballast applied on the rest of the track, and so the track-ends look just too “different”.

An innovative different approach used by one member was to apply a thin acetate sheet, cut to size, under the track-end, and then apply ballast between the sleepers over that acetate “protector”, with the acetate sheet ensuring that the track-end was then only fastened down by the retaining screw, and not held in place by the ballast glue. While this works to some extent, and means that vertical alignment can easily be adjusted, the ballast between the sleepers provides too much rigidity, and it is still extremely difficult to manage horizontal alignment adjustments.

I decided to rather leave the track-ends unballasted. I would paint the track-end sleepers to match the rest of the sleepers on the laid track, and also paint the underlying track bed so that the MDF colouration doesn’t show through. Then I would apply ballast only to the outside of the track bed, but ensuring that the ballast did not protrude higher than the track bed, so that the track-end could swing / flex somewhat in either direction if required. I don’t think that this is the perfect solution, but hopefully it will work and not look TOO out of place.

The track that had been used for the staging yard modules was mostly very dark in colour, almost black (although there is a bit of variability). I mixed some brown in with the black paint that I used to paint the track-ends (but perhaps I should have used a bit more brown?).

The difficulty would be in ensuring that I did not end up sticking the track-ends to the track bed with the paint! I removed the retaining screw, and lifted the track-end slightly, in order to be able to paint underneath it to some extent (otherwise, when the track-end is adjusted horizontally, unpainted MDF might show through). I painted the track-end and the accessible portion of track bed. I then placed a temporary

acetate separator in between the track-end and the painted track bed, and had to keep jiggling these separators while the paint dried (left in overnight). Only once I was happy that the paint was dry and the track-end was loose from the bed, could I then remove the separator and replace the screw, to get the track back into its original alignment, to be able to start ballasting. Initially, I did the painting after having ballasted up to the track-end, but I soon learned that it's better, and a whole lot easier, to the painting first.



While lifting the track-ends to do the painting, all the little acetate shims, that JohnB and James had so painstakingly inserted in order to get the vertical alignments in the staging yard right for the Benoni school set-up, unfortunately then fell out, undoing all the hard work that they had done! *Sorry, guys!* I collected up all the little shims.... James ended up having to spend a lot of time at NMS, re-doing the alignment (but with the staging yard being set up in a completely different arrangement at NMS – in-layout as opposed to off-layout – that would most probably have been the case anyway, or so I prefer to believe).

Despite having been careful to make sure the paint was dry before replacing the screws and getting on with the ballasting, there were still cases where the track-ends had stuck themselves back down to the painted track bed, but they were fairly easily separatable where alignment needed to be adjusted.

The track-ends do show up darker than the ballasted areas of the track (perhaps I could have made them a bit browner), but there would always be some contrast with the lighter grey of the ballasted areas. However, I believe that the essential track-end flexibility has been retained, without too much contrast, particularly with having ballasted the outside of the track bed (it's the sleeper-ends outside of the tracks that look a bit odd.. so I might do a light overspray with an airbrush to gradually darken up the ballast closer to the track-ends).

Right – so only once all of that preliminary, and rather time-consuming, preparation work was completed, could the actual ballasting begin!

I chose to again use the MSP N Scale ballast that Rene’ has in stock at @Trainz. I’d seen that JohnB had done some ballasting on his home layout last year, and liked the look of the colour and particularly the texture of the ballast, and asked where he had obtained it. He’d got it from Rene’. I had then used the same N Scale material on the WFG Expo layout, and also on my WFG Tri-State Power module, and felt it worked well. The “HO” ballast used elsewhere on the Expo layout just felt too “oversized” for my liking.



The MSP ballast, which Rene’ gets from a supplier in the Cape, is quite a dark grey. In order to “stretch” the ballast a bit, and to lighten up the colour somewhat, I blended in some lighter material that we had available at WFG (fine crusher material provided free-of-charge by Gustav de Villiers, from some local quarry), which Neil Plumbly had kindly (and painstakingly) sieved out, using a quarter cup of the sieved material mixed in together with a packet of the MSP stuff.

I decided to do the ballast application by hand, as I had done on my own modules, on the WFG layout and on Tri-State Power. While ballasting on Jason McBean’s layout, I had tried out a ballast applicator that Jason had made for himself out of Perspex, which worked with mixed results, if I recall correctly. More recently, when two colleagues were ballasting a portion of the NTMTK layout, I saw that they had two ballast applicators, both of which they tried out, and one of which they said they preferred. One was a spreader made by Len Swanepoel, much like Jason’s one, rather similar to the Proses ballast spreader illustrated below, which is available from @Trainz. The other, the one they said they preferred using, was a simple 3D-printed item from Craig’s Models, available online for just R90. I didn’t have time to wait for an order from Craig to arrive (I wanted to get the ballasting job finished in time for the Show at Northmead Square, and the courier cost would have exceeded the cost of the applicator), so I just pushed on and did the ballasting manually.



Proses ballast spreader



Len Swanepoel’s spreader



Craig’s Models’ spreader

I use a teaspoon to apply the ballast, first trickling it down the centre between the rails, a teaspoonful at a time, and then spreading it using a finger, ensuring that the sleepers are exposed, and that the spaces

between the sleepers are all properly filled. Any excess ballast material is then dragged further along the track, or occasionally brushed over to the outside. The trick is in getting the application rate just right, or else a bit “under-applied”, as it’s easier to go back and drip in a few extra grains than it is to remove any excess. Being right-handed, I tend to do the application moving from left to right.

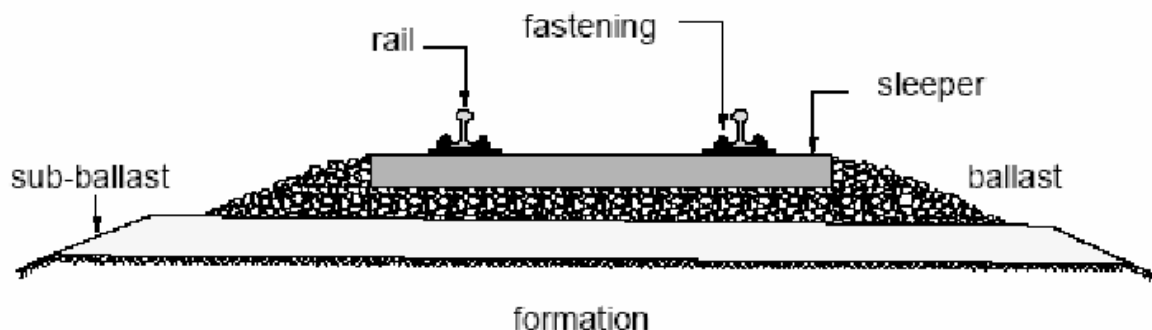


Once the track-centre is done, I then do the outsides, again trickling the ballast along on top of the sleeper-ends, and allowing some to spill down over the side of the track bed. Once again, I run a finger along the top of the sleeper-ends, to clear away any ballast lying on top of the sleepers, and ensuring that the between-sleeper spaces are filled up. If the spillage down the side is too excessive, it can fairly easily be brushed or worked further along, to the next section to be ballasted.

A word of warning about the “finger” method for ballast spreading... running your fingertip over or through the ballast tends to remove some epidermis, and with it some of your fingerprint disappears! So don’t use the finger that you use to unlock your phone, or for any other biometric reason! I had learnt that the hard way previously (having to reset my phone security to recognise my “new” fingerprint), and so now only use my left-hand index finger when ballasting! ☺ I guess that an advantage to losing your fingerprint is that, if you believe you may have inadvertently left your fingerprints at a crime scene, you could always quickly do some manual ballasting of model railway tracks to reduce your chances of being caught!

I then run the back of the teaspoon or a broader spatula along the outer slopes, to try and achieve a fairly uniform slope, at a reasonably steep slope angle.

I also run the tip of the teaspoon, or the edge of my favourite spatula, along the inside of each of the rails, to ensure that there is no ballast caught up against the rail, and then finally run a metal-wheeled wagon along the track, and especially through the points, to check that it runs freely.



Typical railway track cross section



Typical ballast application, with sleepers and sleeper-ends exposed

Because the track bed provided with our modules is the same width as the track, there is a 3mm drop from the bottom of the track to the top of the module surface. This void then fills up with ballast in a triangular manner, with the outer (visible) surface forming the hypotenuse lying at an angle. Coarse prototypical ballast would have a fairly steep natural angle of repose (the slope angle at which the material rests stably). The fine model ballast lies at a somewhat flatter angle, meaning that the ballast at the foot of the slope extends further away from the rails than would probably be prototypical.



Typical Stone Ballasted Track

Once the shaping of the dry-laid ballast is done, it's time to set it in place. This I do with water-diluted cold glue (roughly a 50/50 mix, with some Sunlight liquid soap included to help break the surface tension and assist

the dilute glue to soak in), applied using a medicinal dripper (not as a sprayed-over solution). I drip two drops of diluted cold glue between each sleeper down the centre, and then work my way along each of the outsides, a drop between each sleeper (which tends to wet about halfway down the slope), and then another line of drops along the slope, ensuring that all the ballast is properly wetted. I work in sections of about 12-13cm at a time, basically dividing a 500mm module up into quarters. Fortunately, the application of the dilute glue darkens the ballast, so that one can see what has been done and what has not, but I still use markers placed across the track as a guide. But if you're unsure whether you have applied glue-mix to an area, rather do it again than possibly leave it undone, as this is way preferable to finding out you hadn't, when the ballast falls out when you move the module!



After the glue has been applied, I again do the teaspoon-tip test along the sides of each rail, inside and out, and run a wagon up and down the tracks.

Ballasting of the points has to be done extremely carefully, to ensure that the ballast grains do not affect the switching mechanism, nor get lodged between the guardrails and the rails themselves. In the small between-sleeper gaps it is necessary to drop in just a few grains of ballast at a time off the tip of the teaspoon, so as not to overfill the available volume. A medium-size artist's paintbrush is also necessary to delicately move ballast grains around, where fingertips can't get in. And after the glue application, also done with extreme care, I keep switching the points for a while, just to make sure that there is no glue going to stick them closed, or interfere with the mechanism.



I used up about six and a half bags of ballast (a bag is roughly 300grams, about a cupful), together with the 6½ x quarter-cups of Neil P's sieved material, to ballast the staging yard, having to go back to @Trainz to buy a couple more bags when I realised that I did not have enough. But I still have enough of the mix left to ballast Chicken Wing and Banana Branch!

Once the ballasting was all done, I quickly did some very basic ("minimalistic") vegetation establishment on the exposed surfaces of the modules, between the tracks where the ballast slopes did not meet up and "ground" was left exposed, as well as on the long perimeters of the modules. Where the exposed areas were large enough for something other than a bit of grass to be expected, I left those bits until we've had a discussion about how else they could possibly be scenicked.



A New HOn3 Exhibition Layout – Part ...

By Brian Messenger

Editor's Note: BrianM has been having some technical issues with the track-laying and wiring on his new Expo layout, which he has not yet been able to resolve. He's calling in a "fundi" to assist him. As a result, he has not been able to make any progress with the ballasting and scenicking side of the layout-build, and apologises that he does not have anything written up for us this month.

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 newsletters, 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.*

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. The information I have gathered is again presented below.

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 again this month).....

Editor's Note: Apologies for the lack of an article in this series once again. ☹ I am waiting on five people that I have contacted to get back to me with something, who've all said they will, but all of whom seem to be rather busy, but will hopefully be able to get around to writing up (or just providing basic notes, that I will write up for them) in the near future.

Meanwhile, I will just have to start bugging some other contacts...

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:-

- Saturday 3rd October PMT Swap Meet, John Vorster Tech High School, Waverley, Pretoria
- **Friday 23rd October** **Set up large EMRIG layout for TGMTE**
- **Weekend 24th - 25th October** **The Great Model Train Expo, Wynand Marais Hall, Birchleigh (*)**
- **Saturday 31st October** **Small EMRIG layout set up for Ridgewood School's Robotics event**
- Wednesday 4th November Local Government Elections
- Thurs 12th – Sat 14th November Cherry Festival, Sandstone Estate
- Saturday 14th November Richie's Toy Fair, Mosaic Church, Fairland (*)
- **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

swapmeets@emrig.co.za

(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 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!!!