



The Mail Car

Newsletter of the St Lawrence Division – NMRA

Issue no. 48 – March 2008

St. Lawrence Division web site: www3.sympatico.ca/gd.knowles/sld/sld_index.htm

From the Superintendent's Desk

By Peter Joyce

At our January meeting, after a discussion on staffing an “NFR Modellers’ Corner” at the Kingston Rail-O-Rama on March 15th, we decided to investigate the possibility of holding our regularly scheduled meeting in Kingston with the show. After some diligent footwork by one of our members, a suitable meeting place was found and so off to Kingston we go for a meeting on Saturday March 15th, to be followed by a visit to Rail-O-Rama. Hopefully, this will entice some of our New York State and seaway valley members to join us! We plan on taking our SLD module – our “timesaver” layout - with us for the enjoyment of

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The Bytown Bobber

By Grant Knowles
2008 NFR Convention Chairman

I can almost feel the excitement building! It is less than 8 weeks to go before the Bytown Bobber convention. Have you mailed in your Registration form? In case you have not, you will find the Bytown Bobber Registration form in the latest NFR Flimsy, as well as on the Bytown Bobber web site - www.bytownbobber.org and we will have some on hand at the March SLD Meet.

The convention will take place Friday, Saturday and Sunday. In order to help you plan your time, here is a high level schedule of events for the weekend:

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Overview of the modular layout at the FREMO meet in Rheda, Germany. For more information on FREMO and this meet, please read the article on Page 5

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the younger crowd (and those “young at heart” as well). It may be that some wish to carpool to Kingston. I suggest that this be done informally: if members can’t get together, we could meet at Emmanuel UCC at (say) 7:15 and carpool from there. Let me know if you have problems.

As this report is being written, we are preparing for the next Kitbusters workshop that will be held on February 23rd, in Emmanuel United Church Hall. Our last workshop was quite enjoyable and fruitful as the photo below shows. February 23rd will be the last chance for those of us preparing models for the Bytown Bobber to get critical comment and support from the “experts” among us. Hopefully there will be some “bobbbers” among the projects.



Kitbusters workshop
Photo: Peter Joyce

Preparations for the Bytown Bobber NFR Convention in April are proceeding smoothly; the Committee is holding regular meetings and all appears to be in order: a separate, more detailed update can be found elsewhere in this issue. A number of local members have already taken advantage of the NMRA Canada 6 month trial membership; this augers well for attendance.

In the future, for our May meeting, we may be able to schedule a trip to St. Constant to visit the CRHA ExpoRail Museum with a side trip to local hobby stores. More information on this outing will be found in the April column.

Until Kingston, happy modelling.

Friday April 25

10:00 AM SLD Kitbusters Workshop opens
1:00 PM Registration Desk opens
2:00 PM Back Drop Workshop starts
5:00 PM Model contest, Raffle, and Silent Auction open
6:30 PM Clinics start (four rounds)

Saturday April 26

8:30 AM Clinics start (two rounds)
8:00 AM Model contest, Raffle, and Silent Auction open
10:30 AM NFR Annual General Meeting
1:00 PM Layout and Prototype Tours start
6:30 PM Banquet starts followed by Raffle and Silent Auction pickup

Sunday April 27

8:00 AM Raffle and Silent Auction pickup
8:30 AM Clinics start (two rounds)
11:00 AM Layout Tours start.

A more detailed schedule will be included in the Registration Kit that you will receive when you check in. Be sure to arrive early on Friday so you can take part in the SLD Kitbusters Workshop and the general mingling.

The Model Contest remains a cornerstone activity of the convention and I extend our invitation to all to participate in this event. I would like to take the opportunity to remind you we will have special Appearance Contest Category for this convention – “Bobbers”. So enter your favourite four wheel caboose (Bobber) as we will be handing out a trophy for the bobber that receives the most votes!

The Prototype Tour details have now been solidified (more details are on the web site). We will be providing a bus tour that will take you to the OC Transpo Street Car restoration project and the OTC Command Office, followed by a visit to the Museum of Science and Technology to view the Bytown Society collection of prototype equipment (working Shay and Brownhoist crane). The tour will then proceed to the Ottawa Central Railway yard to view their equipment and possibly the OC Transpo Light Rail facilities and equipment. This promises to be an enjoyable afternoon where you get to be chauffeured around! We have lots of seats, so don't be afraid to sign up.

As a special attraction this year, we will be holding a Silent Auction throughout the weekend. Everyone is invited to participate in this event as a Seller or Buyer or both.

This will be an ideal opportunity for you to liquidate some of those railroad items that you no longer have a need for yet will be a gem for someone else. Similarly you may find that hard to find item, you will never know!

The concept is rather simple, just bring out your treasure, register with the Silent Auction team and place your item on display and watch the interest grow. At the close of the auction, we will tally up the buyers and sellers accounts and you can then collect your purchases and proceeds. This will be a fun event that will provide you with the opportunity to be part of the convention hype.

Of course, do not forget all the great layouts and clinics we have lined up for you along with the NFR Banquet on Saturday night.

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This will be my last Mailcar Convention article before the momentous event, so I hope to meet each and every one of you at the convention.

Remember to check out our Convention Web page on a regular basis as we will be posting new material weekly – www.bytownbobber.org

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the convention executives should you have and questions, comments or concerns.

Grant Knowles
2008 NFR Convention Chairman

SLD Module

By Grant Knowles

Over the past few meets, we have brought up and discussed the past and future of the SLD Module with the membership. While its future is under review, it continues to see active use.

The Gatineau Model Railroad club has been a regular participant at the Mont Bleu Ford hobby show and the SLD module has made a number of appearances under their supervision. As the Mont Bleu Ford show coincided with the January SLD meet, we arranged a “transfer of the goods” in the church’s parking lot (makes it sound like a criminal activity doesn’t it?). Here we see Pierre and Peter Joyce carefully loading the SLD Module into their mini van for transportation to the show. It was a rather tight fit, but they managed to fit it in along with the foot bench.



Loading the module is a tight fit!
Photo: Grant Knowles

The module will also be making a guest appearance at the Kingston Train Show this year. Based on our past experience at Railfair, we are expecting this to be a huge hit in Kingston. It will also provide the opportunity to distribute more Bytown Bobber flyers!

NMRA Dates

SLD Meetings		NFR Spring Convention	
March 15, 2008	Doffers 725 Arlington Park Kingston		Bytown Bobber April 25 - 27, 2008 Chimo Hotel, Ottawa
			SLD Workshops April 25, 2008 In conjunction with the NFR Convention at the Chimo Hotel
May 31, 2008	TBA		

Model Railroading FREMO Style

By Andreas Mank

While researching potential targets for railroad and model railroad activities before my fall vacation in Germany, I noticed an announcement on the FREMO webpage at www.fremo.org about a five day meet in Rheda. The meet would start on the Friday I was going to travel to Germany and continue until Wednesday, which happened to be a public holiday.

Why was I interested in a FREMO meet? For those of you that have not heard about FREMO, let me give you a short introduction. FREMO was founded 27 years ago by a small group of model railroaders interested in prototypical operation. The original founders were avid readers of North American modelling magazines and very much interested in the trend to model prototypical operations. Model Railroading is a very popular hobby in Germany, lots of families have small layouts at home and model railroad clubs with permanent layouts can be found in almost all med-size and large towns in Germany. Please read the box at the bottom of page 7 for more information on model railroading in Germany. The basic idea behind FREMO is to have an organisation of likeminded model railroaders working on modules and coming together a few times a year for operating sessions.

FREMO stands for FReunde Europaeischer MOdeleisenbahnen (Friends of European Model railroads). From the beginning FREMO had members in Germany and the Netherlands and quickly spread to other European countries. They developed standards for their modules which were revolutionary at the time – wide radius of curvature (40in to 80in radius), lower rail size (Code 83), turnout dimensions closer to prototype, etc. Not only were the physical specifications revolutionary, but also the operating scenarios. Considering the space required to model true mainlines, and the complexity of modeling all the required signalling and interlocking schemes, the membership of FREMO studied the prototypical ways of operating secondary lines which relied on verbal communication methods in conjunction with some signalling to direct the traffic. They not only adapted these methods to their set-ups, but also developed tools to support their effort. With the always changing nature of the modular set-ups, it is a challenge to come up with different time tables and operating concepts. These days, they have developed software tools to make these tasks easier.

At the time I left Germany 17 years ago, FREMO just started to gain traction. Over the years I had followed their progress a little bit, and recently I became quite interested to see one of their elaborate set-ups. As I am very much interested in prototypical operations, I decided it might be nice to pay them a visit. As all FREMO meets are for members only, I contacted the organisers of the Rheda meet and received an invitation to join them.

The meet took place in the gymnasium of a local high school. The gymnasium was available as schools in that part of Germany were on fall break. It provided for a total of 15,000 sq ft of floor space, plus adjacent space for meals and meetings. As you can see from the picture on the cover, which was taken from the raised viewing gallery of the gymnasium, the space was packed with the layout.

The layout depicted a network of secondary lines in North West Germany. The DB lines interacted with lines of the NS (Netherlands Spoorwegen, the Dutch National Railway), two privately owned lines and a narrow gauge line.



The station of Wega is part of a junction with a diverging line in Y configuration. The operator sits inside the wye; the station is controlled from a model of the actual interlocking plant.

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On the second day of the meet, operations started in an early 1960's timeframe, with mostly steam operation. (Steam lasted into the late 1970's in West Germany and even later in East Germany). Each operating session, the timeframe was advanced by changing some rolling stock and on the last day, it reached the 1980's. The DB would operate those lines in "Zugmeldeverkehr", without a central dispatcher.

In "Zugmeldeverkehr", the station operator would call the next station down the line and offer the train to the operator there. If accepted, the signals would be set to green and interlocked. For lightly travelled lines, not all stations would have operators, and the conductor of the first train to reach an unmanned intermediate station would take the duties of the station operator. This way of operating is very easily modeled and allowed me as a novice train operator to quickly take part in the operating session. I did not have to worry about communications with a dispatcher on an unfamiliar layout; I just followed the signal indications. Those were given either through model signals or verbal indication from the operator in those stations where the modeling progress had not reached the signals.



Narrow Gauge winds through town.

Freight traffic is routed via car cards and waybills as on many layouts here in Canada. Traffic flow was supported by lots of prototypical paperwork, such as work instructions for freight trains. These include blocking instructions, which traffic to pick and drop at each station, and timetables (all trains are scheduled). Freight traffic was routed according to a predetermined pattern, supported by several staging yards for off-line destinations, 3 main classification yards and several smaller yards. One of the classification yards featured a working hump yard and one of the highlights of my visit was to operate the hump engine for one session. The hump yard worked very well, about 90% of the cars reached their destination track without further help. The FREMO setting has the advantage that they have instituted consistent standards for wheels and car weight (and other technical specifications) so that most cars roll reasonably well down the hump.



The hump yard in Walburg is a centerpiece of the freight forwarding scheme.

The layout was powered by a Digitrax compatible DCC system, but FREMO members developed their own boosters and throttles. The simple throttle is so cheap, that they usually have one per engine, thus eliminating the need to dial up engines and accidentally grabbing the wrong one.

I had a fantastic time visiting the FREMO show in Rheda, participating in 6 operating sessions of 2.5 hrs each. For more pictures from this meet, please visit: www.thwoditsch.de/fremo/rheda07/

FREMO not only has members modeling the DB or other European Railways, but also a group of modellers interested in North American railways. There are two sets of module standards for NA railways, in HO scale and in N scale. Both groups had small layouts at the 1. US prototype modellers meet in Rodgau Dudenhofen (see my report in the November 2007 Mailcar). A good link to start you for more information is Wolfgang Dudler's webpage at www.westportterminal.de

Recently, some modellers here in Canada have picked up the FREMO standards. Trevor Marshall and Pierre Olivier built a set of modules depicting the operations in the Peterborough industrial district in the 1970's. For more information on Trevor's and Pierre's layout, you can check their webpage at:

<http://stinksandbangs.fotopic.net/c1221609.html>.

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Model Railroading in Germany

Model Railroading is a very popular hobby in Germany, lots of families have small layouts at home and model railroad clubs with permanent layouts can be found in almost all mid-size and large towns in Germany. Since most families in Germany live in apartments, the tendency to congregate in clubs allows people access to larger layouts that would otherwise not have been able to enjoy a layout at all.

Model railroading in Germany is also driven by what one can (or could) observe from the prototype. In most cases, the prototype is Deutsche Bahn (DB, The German government owned railway) or one of their predecessor organizations. Passenger traffic is very much public face of the railroad in Germany, with high speed / high density traffic on most mainlines and regular service even on branch lines. Due to the high traffic density, all mainlines and most branch lines are fully signalled and interlocked. Due to the much shorter distances, freight service is mostly an overnight affair, with early morning delivery at the customer site and late afternoon pick-up.

With the space constraints faced by many model railroaders in Germany, the typical setting of a layout is that of a junction station. The mainline is fed by staging, if possible, and semi-automated. The branch line side is mostly manually operated for increased play value. The operator works mostly from a "tower man" position and owners mostly play by themselves. While the club setting usually allows for a larger layout, the diverse nature of the membership also inhibits the introduction of new concepts, like prototypical operation.

These comments certainly apply to the time period up to 1991, when I left Germany. Typical home layouts of the time were using 14.5" and 17" radius curves, model passenger cars were shortened, for example scaled at 1:100 in length vs. 1:87 for HO scale to fit around those curves, rail height was between code 100 and code 110 and commercial turnouts had diverging angles of 15 – 30 degree. The model railroad manufacturers even developed a mechanism for mounting couplers that allows close coupling on straight track and automatically increases the gap to go around tight curves.

Since I left Germany, there has been a movement driven by FREMO and other advanced thinking clubs, the model railroad press, and a few individuals to more prototypical operation. Up until the late 1980's, the DB was conducting less than carload (LCL) business and single car lot operations covering even small towns in all of Germany. Ironically, just as the DB has phased out LCL and even car lot freight over the last 15 years and is embracing intermodal and unit train concepts, the railway modeller are discovering the inherent play value of freight operations based on those concepts.

Display Table

By Grant Knowles

In keeping with the season, the Display Table theme for January was Snow Plows and Flangers. And as is typical of the SLD Display Table, we had all sorts of models on display, so without further a due, let's review what was on display.

Dave Primeau brought out his HO scale Boston & Maine Plow Extra 2649 which was comprised of three very interesting pieces of rolling stock. At the front end we had the wood Boston & Maine Plow which is pushed through the drifts by the brute force provided by the 2-8-0 steam engine 2649. Caboose 104274 brings up the rear providing creature comforts for the crew on those cold runs. Based on the snow plow's pristine paint finish, I would say his RR has not seen a lot of snow this year!



Stan Conley brought out a series of rolling stock projects that he recently completed. This included a Sunoco tank car made by Red caboose that he added brake rigging, air lines, etc to. This was followed by a slick Tichy USRA rebuild Georgia Box Car painted in silver and black, a stock Proto 2000 GM&O wooden hopper and a "stock" Proto 2000 Champion Oils tank car. All models had been weathered with an airbrush, gauche and powered chalks. You cannot beat the quality of the HO kits these days.

Mike Hamer has been on a bent of late building a number of laser cut structure kits for the future expansion of his layout. First up we have the Morty's Market kit from Surrey Custom Models. The significance of this model is that Mike used Art Deco Sandstone (from Michaels Craft Store) to represent the stuccoed walls. It looks really good. Mike has scratch built the detailed interior and plans to add additional exterior details.

Next up, Mike had the Bar Mills Whistle-stop Junction Kit. This laser cut kit makes a very nice small station that would be at home on any railroad. Mike painted the station in the typical Boston & Maine colours.

Saving the biggest for last, Mike had just completed the Bar Mills Shipyard Brewing Company "background" model. This is an impressive multi story building with details that are very reminiscent of the New England part of the country. Though this is a large building, its small foot print makes it ideal to fill in that back corner of the layout.



I cannot wait until the Bytown Bobber layout tours in order to see Jim McSherry's latest additions. Each meet Jim brings out another neat structure he has been working on for his layout. In this case Jim had on hand a long railroad bridge built from large trees! The idea came from a Tall Timber & Short Lines article. The model is not quite finished yet awaiting bark details, NBW castings and installation.

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Most of us are content to play with trains that fit comfortably inside our basements. Al Craig has chosen not to follow the main stream and has been deeply involved in the large scale part of the hobby. Over the past few months he has been very carefully assembling his Aster USRA 2-8-2 Live Steam locomotive kit. This is a 3/8" scale (gauge 1) model he has lettered for his Lanark Central Railroad. Al claims he has 46 hours invested so far and has some more work to do before it is ready for steaming. Hopefully the snow will be gone by then!



In keeping with the display table theme, I brought out my HOn3 Rio Grande Southern Plow Flanger 02. This was built 25 years ago in a hotel room while I was on a prolonged business trip. It is a wood / white metal kit made by Durango Press. This is a home built plow the RGS shop crew built on top of a regular flanger. The model even runs like a charm in front of my locos.

The Colorado & Southern had an almost year round battle with snow and drifts through their mountain routes. They shop folks developed the "Butterfly" plows that were installed on the locomotives in the winter months. The 2-6-0 mogul is a prime example. Note the red flanger blades which are also mounted on the front pilot.

That is the review of this month's display table. Photos of these models can be found on the SLD January Meet web page at: http://members.fortunecity.com/gknowles/meets/jan_08/jan_08.htm. Thanks to everyone who brought out something for show.

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The modules are well executed as I could see during their recent exhibition at the Toronto Christmas train show. There are others in the greater local area working on modules based on FREMO standards. The Canadian Association of Railway Modellers (CARM) is trying to put a FREMO layout together for their annual meeting in Hamilton on Victoria Day weekend. Another sizeable contingent of FREMO modellers can be found in Northern California.

Peterboro industrial FREMO modules





Next Division Meet

St Lawrence Division – NMRA

When:

Saturday, March 15, 2008

Where:

Doffers

725 Arlington Park
Kingston

Doors open at 9:00 am -- Admission \$5.00

What's on:

Morning:

Division Business

Clinic

- Jim McSherry

Display

Door Prizes

- You never know what to expect!

Afternoon:

- Rail O Rama

