



The Mail Car

Newsletter of the St Lawrence Division – NMRA

Issue no. 68 – March 2012

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

Superintendent's Report

By Ron Newby

Well where to begin, there is a lot to report this month. Guess I will just pick a topic and get started. Thanks to those who signed up to do the modellers corner for the Kingston Rail-O-Rama show on the weekend of March 10-11, 2012. If you have not signed up yet to do either one or both days, it is not too late, just e-mail me and I will add you to the list.

Speaking of doing the modellers corner we plan to do the same thing for the upcoming Ottawa Rail Expo that will be held on the weekend of May 5-6, 2012. There will be a sign up sheet at the March meeting so if you want to help promote the SLD please feel free to sign up.

I received an e-mail from the organizers of the Sudbury convention requesting our help. It seems sign-ups are slow coming in so if you are planning to go and have not sent in your registration, please do so as soon as possible. It will cost you \$10.00 more if you register after March 1, 2012. They are also looking for clinicians to put on clinics at the show so if have a topic and would like to put on a clinic please let me know as soon as possible and I will get you in contact with the organizing committee.

Continued on Page 2



Bob Farquhar built this A&W take-out restaurant from a Twin Whistle kit. Bob did his usual and went over board by providing burgers on the grill and scale French fries but also the foam on the root beer glasses
Photo: Andreas Mank

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Copy Deadlines

- May Issue - April 15
- September Issue - August 15
- November Issue - October 15
- January Issue - December 15
- March Issue - February 15

Special thanks to Beate Herzig for proof-reading and general nit-picking

This month meeting will have a varied theme as Peter Nesbitt will give us the ins and outs of programming decoders and Lorne Munro will tell us how he goes about building plaster buildings. Those who have seen Lorne’s work will agree that his plaster buildings are a work of art. In the afternoon there will be two great layouts to visit, and I promise to start the meeting on time.

Looking forward we will have to hold elections at the May meet. Two of the current members of the executive either need to step down (Greg Montague, our paymaster has reached his term limit) or cannot continue as is the case for James VanBlitterswyk, the assistant superintendent. I would like to thank both Greg and James for the service to the SLD.

At the same time I would like to appeal to all members to consider serving on the executive of the SLD for a term. Details on the election and how you can volunteer for a position are given in the article by Peter Joyce, our election steward.

That is all for now, looking forward to seeing everyone on March 31, 2012, till then, may your train stay on the track and may you never run out of rail.

Car Pooling for Sudbury

By Andreas Mank

The 2012 NFR convention will be held from April 27 to April 29 in Sudbury. Several SLD members have already registered and we expect that even more will join this fun activity.

In order to lower the cost for participants from the SLD, the executive has decided to offer a car pooling service. You will not only save on the cost of gas, but also have pleasant company for the drive. As a bonus, you are also doing your part for our environment. Please let us know if you have seats available or are looking for a seat in someone else’s car and we will facilitate the matching of available seats with willing participants.

Those who like to take advantage of this offer, please contact Ron Newby at oapsry@magma.ca or (613) 841-4165. Ideally, we would like to make the arrangements in time for the March SLD meeting (March 31) so that the groups can meet each other in person and that there is time for adjustments to the car pools, if necessary.

Manual Turnout Control

By **Andreas Mank**

An empty in-box is the bane of existence for any editor. It is particularly bad in my case, as I do not have a group of writers on staff that I could direct to give me an article between 1 to 3 pages in length, including some photographs. So it falls to me to fill the pages of **The Mail Car**.

Unfortunately, I am also very busy at my paying job, leaving little time for actual modelling. Therefore the range of subjects I could write about is very narrow, as over the last few weeks I was mainly occupied with two tasks only.

Firstly, I spend some time developing an improvement on the old car card and waybill system that should make it easier for new and in-experienced operators to run trains on Jacques Huppe's ONE layout. In particular it takes the guesswork out of train blocking and car routing procedures. As part of the introduction of these enhancements, all the waybills had to be reviewed and I used the exercise to also perform a comprehensive modelling exercise on the traffic flow on his layout. The actual implementation (printing new waybills, which look really nice!) is in Vic Dohar's and Jacques' hands.

As the subject is a bit dry and likely only of interest to a few people in our group, I decided to write about the other activity that kept my hobby hours occupied.

As you might know, I actually work on two different layouts. (There is a story behind this which I will not delve into at this time) The HO-scale layout depicts the first couple of miles on the CN Newmarket sub in Toronto, an area dense with industry (at least at a time when stuff was still manufactured in Canada) with a single track main line running through. The N-scale layout models the GM&O, CB&Q and the Wabash around Mexico, MO and will eventually extend to Centralia, MO.

Over the years, I have struggled with the problem of how to control the turnouts on both layouts. The prototypes in both cases had very few automated (i.e. remote controlled) turnouts in the areas that I am modelling. There were always enough switchmen on the ground in the industrial trackage on the CN to line up turnouts and almost the entire section was within yard limits. The traffic density on the GM&O line (CB&Q had trackage rights) was low. The line was operated under Timetable & Train Order with all the siding switches manually operated. The Wabash line saw a bit more traffic, running under ABS (on a single track line), but the siding switches were operated manually. The only exceptions were a few turnouts in interlocking plants at level crossings. Therefore the idea of using either solenoid or motor control did not appeal to me.



Slide Switch actuator, the coat hanger is not yet installed.

The N-scale layout came first, so let us discuss this one first. Caboose Industries ground throws, particularly in N-scale are huge and actually in a lot of cases force compromises with respect to track layout. As I am using mostly Peco turnouts, which have a nice over center spring to force the points in alignment, I decided to forego any actuating mechanism on the first section of the layout. The idea was to reach in. (Almost everything is close to the front edge as the layout is only between 8 and 20 in deep) It worked reasonably well for myself, but not so good for others. The layout was set 59" track height (1.5m in the much nicer standard units) and pretty much anybody shorter than me had a problem!

One other problem that started to appear was related to

Continued on page 4

power routing on the Code 55 electrofrog turnouts – they really need to be wired and the polarity of the frog needs to be changed as required to work well. In order to cover both problems, the next step was to use a slide switch under the layout, with a stiff throw wire to the turnout and a “reformed” coat hanger to the fascia to move the slide switch. One of the contacts on the slide switch is then wired to the frog.

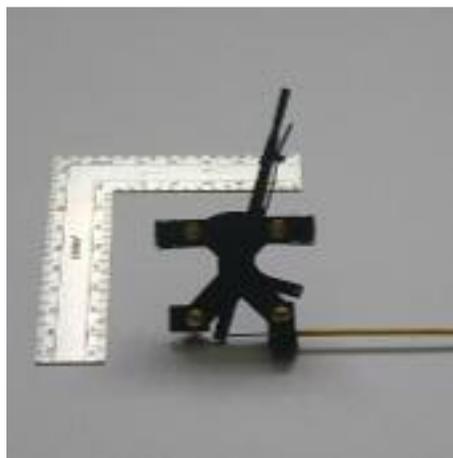
The coat hangers were a cheap solution devised at a time when I was in between jobs and cash had to be conserved. They sort of worked, but the tolerances in the alignment of the various components are tight and they bind easily. There are obviously improved versions of this idea that would work better.

At this point in the narrative, the “great basement flood” happened and the layout was taken apart in several sections (it was designed to come apart) and stored for several years.



Micro-switch linked to the throw bar for changing polarity on Peco electrofrog turnouts.

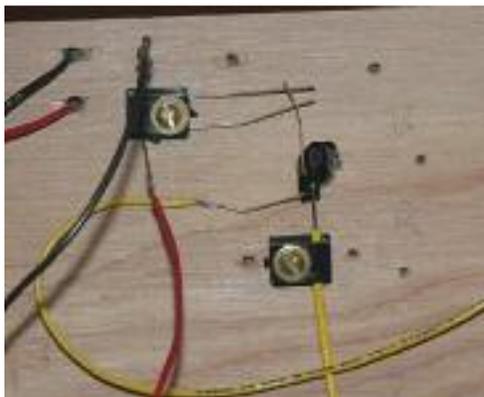
In comes the HO-scale layout, which was conceived as an exercise to fill the time between fixing the old basement and buying a new basement. Similar constraints apply here as well. The turnouts are Peco Code 75 electrofrog. As I did not want to continue the coat hanger mechanism I looked at alternatives. I considered model airplane linkages, but could not come up with a satisfactory way of integrating the electrical switching requirements. In the end, I found a way to install a micro-switch under the layout linked to the throw bar on the Peco turnout to provide the necessary polarity change for the frog. Nevertheless, I was never really happy with this solution as it still required the operator to reach into the layout to line the turnout. On the CN Newmarket sub, this is a big issue, as the line is running through an urban canyon in most of the area in question and there are several turnouts which will be difficult to reach as industrial structures are blocking access.



Armstrong switch lever from Hump Yard.

After moving to a new basement with room for both layouts and starting a new job, I finally got back to thinking about the problem of manual turnout control. Meanwhile, somebody else had come up with what looked to be a reasonable solution to my conundrum. The solution combines a push-pull linkage with a hefty lever modelled on an actual Armstrong switch lever to activate it and some provisions for electrical switching of frog power. On top of that, it is also reasonably priced, at US \$ 6.50 (plus shipping) in quantities of 20 or more. That compares very well with model airplane linkages and is only slightly more expensive than ground throws. The product is called the Hump Yard Purveyance – check www.humpyard.com. You can download the assembly instructions from the web site and get a better feel for the product.

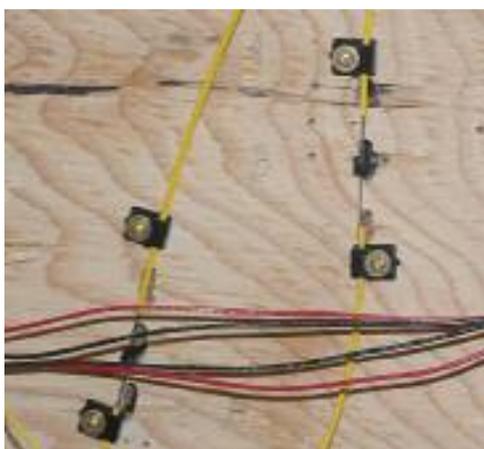
After reviewing all the on-line info I could find, I ordered 20 units to try out. Assembly is required, the levers are injection moulded Delrin® and consist of three main parts and a few other bits that depend a bit on the exact configuration required. The assembly is held together by 4 screws. Most of the work required is in slightly opening up the screw holes, as I found a lot of them too tight. The push pull road is a steel wire running in a Teflon sleeve. It comes in 6ft length. I assembled one unit to ensure I understood the instructions completely and



Modified Hump Yard solution for providing frog power with the correct polarity.



A micro switch is a much cleaner solution to provide frog power with the correct polarity.



Linkage can be tied together to allow one lever to actuate two paired turnouts, for example in a cross-over.

that it actually worked. Next I started “mass production” and built the levers sitting in front of the TV watching football.

The first bank of 6 levers was installed on the west end staging of the GM&O/CB&Q line. The turnouts are the equivalent of Atlas N-scale Code 80 turnouts and thus have no centering spring and no powered frogs. The linkage was easy to install and works like a charm. With these turnouts, I got the best results by fixing the points dead center, setting the Armstrong lever to center and tightening the screw in the clamp near the turnout. Usually, this results in the points being pressed onto the stock rails on either side when the lever is in the end position without any further adjustments.

The next set went to my HO-scale test track. The 5 turnouts are Peco Code 75, the track is set up similar to a timesaver switching layout. It turns out that aligning the linkage is more complex with the centering spring in the Peco turnout, but with a bit of fiddling it is possible.

As 4 of the 5 turnouts on the test track are paired, in principle only three levers are required. With the Hump Yard Purveyance, it is possible to run two (paired) turnouts from the same lever and they will throw simultaneously. The kits come with a special clamp that allows connecting two linkages. Aligning the linkages for the paired Peco turnouts is a major undertaking. At first it actually did not work at all – until I realised that I had modified these turnouts by drilling out the hole in the throwbar when I was prototyping the micro switch solution for the powered frogs. I was able to improve the situation by press fitting short pieces of brass tubing in the too large holes in the throwbar, thus reducing the effective opening. Even then it was quite an undertaking to get everything to work.

What about power for those frogs? Well, the Hump Yard instructions actually suggest using the steel throw rod as part of the electric circuit. I have my doubts about the wisdom of this approach as it is difficult to solder to the throw rod for a reliable electrical connection. I am also concerned about the quality of the contact against those brass whiskers, particularly under DCC short (up to 5A) conditions. Nevertheless, I will try it out in a slightly modified version. I extended the linkage using brass wire on the extension, which alternatively contacts one of the two brass wires in the clamp.

Alternatively, it is very straightforward to align a micro switch with the moving linkage so that the polarity of the frog can be changed.

Here is my verdict: While some aspects of the Hump Yard Purveyance switch linkage are a bit challenging to adjust, in particular when used with turnouts with centering springs, overall I am quite happy with the product. I will have to get

Continued on page 7

Details of May 2012 Election of Officers for the St. Lawrence Division

By Peter Joyce, Election Steward

In May, at the annual general meeting an election of officers is required for the Division. The following extract from the current St. Lawrence Division (SLD) Code of Operating Rules covers the description of the executive officers, the terms of office and their areas of responsibility. In particular please note that in order to prevent the abuse of volunteer goodwill, and the potential abuse of office there are strict limits on terms of office. The maximum number of terms is two within the same office and three overall.

For the May election, two vacancies need to be filled: Assistant Superintendent and Paymaster.

Officers and their Duties

14. The officers of the SLD shall be superintendent, assistant superintendent, clerk, paymaster and dispatcher. The officers shall form the executive of the SLD. At its discretion, the executive may increase the number of officers or change their duties. Two offices may be held by the same person except that a person may not be both clerk and paymaster at the same time. An officer must be a member of the SLD.
15. Officers shall hold office for two years from the date of their election, or if appointed, until the next election, or until their successors are elected or appointed in their stead. Officers shall be subject to removal by simple majority vote at a general meeting of members. The maximum number of consecutive full terms that a person may be an officer is three and he may only hold the same office for two of them.
16. Officers shall be elected at the annual general meeting of members held in an even numbered year. The election portion of the meeting will be chaired by the election steward. If for any reason, an officer is unable to complete his term of office, the executive may appoint a replacement.
17. The superintendent shall be the chief executive officer of the SLD and chair all meets and meetings. He is also the division's representative to the NFR and the NMRA.
The assistant superintendent shall promote the NMRA and the SLD to others, arrange the program for meets, perform such other duties assigned to him by the superintendent, and in the absence or disability of the superintendent, perform the duties of the superintendent.
The clerk shall serve as the division's secretary performing the normal duties of such position including: maintaining the list of members and supporters, issuing membership cards, keeping proper minutes of special and annual general meetings of members, ensuring such meetings are properly announced to members, keeping count of votes, and preparing proxies.
The paymaster is the division's treasurer and will perform the normal duties of such position, including the presentation of a financial statement at each annual general meeting of members.
The dispatcher will be responsible for preparing and distributing the Mail Car, as well as announcing meets and other events.

It should be noted that as a practical matter the Editor of the Mail Car is now appointed by the superintendent and does not have to be the same person as the Dispatcher whose principle

responsibilities are distribution of the Mail Car, and other announcements to the membership. The Mail Car Editor and Inspector are appointed by the standing Superintendent and do not have the same term of office restrictions. Andreas Mank and Grant Knowles have agreed to remain as Editor and Inspector respectively.

The Division only works if there are active participants in the functioning of the Division and this means that we need an influx of new volunteers to help organize and guide the Division for the next two years. Anyone willing and interested in volunteering for any of the positions should contact me before the May meet (particularly if you cannot attend in person), or make your intentions known during the election portion of the meeting.

Closer to the May meet, up to date information will be available on the division web site. In particular, in the event of multiple members vying for a position, information on proxy voting will be provided for members who cannot attend the meet.

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Continued from page 5 "Manual Turnout Control"

some more experience with aligning paired turnouts to one lever and try out the use of a bell crank to adjust the throw – but in the end I might just use one lever per turnout to circumvent this problem.

One can argue that the use of Armstrong levers is not really prototypical, as the turnouts in question were hand thrown. Considering the alternatives, I am happy with the compromise: Nobody has to reach into the scenery, the lever style is at least a railroad style, it is nicely done and well proportioned for “real” hands, the action is smooth and the cost is affordable even for a large layout. I will be installing the control levers grouped in banks based on logical position at various spots along the fascia. Alternatively, each lever could be installed to line up with the turnout it controls.

As for alternatives, everyone will have their own opinion on what works best. Personally, I would only consider changing once somebody invents a remote controlled scale switch person that actually walks to the turnout, unlocks the mechanism and lines the turnout – all for a similar cost as what the hump yard mechanism is going to cost me.

So this is what I have to say about manual turnout control. If I bored you to death, then I would like to encourage you to send me material to publish, as otherwise it will likely happen again! The editor is always willing to provide help to aspiring authors and if your photos do not turn out too well, there are solutions as well. Alternatively, you could volunteer to be the next editor of **The Mail Car** – elections are coming up in May! Then you can decide on the suitability of the upcoming article “Classifying by the Numbers” describing the aforementioned improvements to the Car Card and Waybill system.

Display Table

By Grant Knowles

The subject for the January Display table was “Motive Power” which attracted as many models related to the topic as those not!



Texaco Gas Station from a Microscales kit presented by Bob Farquhar.
Photo: Andreas Mank

First up is Bob Farquhar, his A&W take-out restaurant made the front page. Bob also brought out his Texaco Gas Station that was built from a Microscales Model wood kit. The model is built on a detailed plaster base with Bob’s customary high quality down to earth weathering and details including shingles from Papercreek.

I do not know how Jeff Trew managed it, but he got Paul Anderson to assemble his American Chemical & Potash industry. This is a metal kit made by California Model Co. back in the early 60’s. Paul commented that this was his first adventure assembling a metal kit which is soldered together. Paul noted that one must be careful to not melt previous joins when assembling the kit. Looks like it will be a massive structure when completed.



Paul Anderson is assembling this early 60’s metal kit by California models for Jeff Trew.
Photo: Andreas Mank

Michael Rozeboom had three diesels on display, the first is a PA A-A set from Trix. These are a die cast metal design that has rather noisy motor/gear arrangement. Next up Mike had a beautiful E8A made by Broadway Limited Imports that is DCC and sound equipped. The third locomotive Mike showed was an Alco switcher sporting a Stewart body on an Athearn chassis that he is currently building.

Now that Lorne Munro has completed his Kinmount Sawmill, he has moved onto a 150’ Howe Truss bridge that was built from a Juneco kit. Once again, spotless work!

Blackstone recently came out with a line of D&RGW C19 HOn3 locomotives. Grant Knowles picked up #346 to run on his Colorado & Southern railroad. It transpires the C&S leased three of these locomotives

in their latter years from the D&RGW. Grant plans to add the trademark Ridgeway spark arrestor to this DCC / sound equipped model.

Our dean of large scale, Al Craig brought out three short ore cars in #1 Gauge. Al had painted these with automotive primer and applied CDS Dry Transfers for his Lanark Central railroad.

Now that Doug Cushman has decided to return home from the blistering hot south, he has brought out a small portion of his steam fleet for us to admire. Doug had a wonderfully painted CNR U-1-b 4-8-2 Mountain that represents the one that pulled the Royal Train in Atlantic Canada back in 1939. The prototype retained the “Royal” skirting for the remainder of its career. The model represents the locomotive after its final shopping in 1957 in Stratford. Next is a CNR/GTW U-3-a 4-8-4 that represents one of a group of GTW locomotives that moved permanently to Canada during the Second



Central Vermont 2-10-4 was the largest steam power in New England.
 Photo: Andreas Mank

World War. The third loco Doug had on display was a huge Central Vermont T-3b 2-10-4 Texas that was the largest steam power that appeared in New England. Last up is CNR S-2a #3552 Mikado that represents the last steam locomotive to be shipped at Stratford. It was eventually sent back out.

Our faithful S scale member, Alex Binkley, had a set of freight cars on display. The flat car was scratch built, the hopper is a Pacific Rail kit, the tank car came from American Models and the double door boxcar is a modified Quality Craft kit. All models were weathered with chalks.

Mike Hamer, our structures master, had two “in progress” kits on the table. Old Morris Tabacconist is a Rail Scale Miniatures kit that will be massaged to fit into his Carrick’s Corner. Mike is part way through kit bashing the I.O.O.F. hall made by Rusty Stumps Scale Models. Mike expects the final version will hardly resemble the original kit!

That does it for this month. Thank you to everyone who brought out their pride and joy for us to examine. Additional photos are available on the January meet web page:
http://sld-nmra.ca/meets/jan_12/jan_12.htm

TimeTable

Date	Meetings	SLD Workshops
February 25, 2012		Emmanuel United Church
March 31, 2012	Emmanuel United Church	
April 21, 2012		Emmanuel United Church
April 27 – 29, 2012	NMRA NFR Regional Convention Sudbury	
May 5 & 6, 2012	Ottawa Rail Expo Field House Carleton University	
May 26, 2012	tbd	



Next Division Meet

St Lawrence Division – NMRA

When:

Saturday, March 31, 2012

Where:

Emmanuel United Church

691 Smyth Road,
Ottawa

East of CHEO at Dauphin Road

Doors open at 9:00 am -- Admission \$7.00

What's on:

Morning:

Division Business

Clinics:

Peter Nesbitt
Programming DCC decoders

Lorne Munroe
Plaster Casting Buildings

Display:

Structures

Afternoon:

Layout Tour

