

# Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway

## NEWSLETTER 19 - FEBRUARY 2014

This On30 narrow gauge layout (American 'O' Scale (1:48) running on 16.5 mm narrow gauge track) portrays the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway's Three Foot Gauge service in Colorado from Denver to Durango (450.2 miles) then on to Silverton (another 45 miles leading to connection with the Silverton Northern). The layout's operations also incorporate those on the branch line from Durango to Farmington in New Mexico (but run here as a Colorado & Southern line for variety) and on the Rio Grande Southern line between Durango and Ridgway. The layout thus represents four of the railroads and a considerable proportion of the Three Foot Gauge track mileage that once existed at high altitudes (up to 10,000 feet plus) in the Rocky Mountains lying within the American states of Colorado and New Mexico.

The layout is centred on Durango and the American Smelting & Reduction Company ore smelter around the year 1905 at the peak of freight and ore transportation for the precious metals (mainly silver) mining industry in central Colorado.

The layout has approximately 2.1 scale miles of track and is electrically divided into sections. There are currently 50 turnouts ('points') and a scale 48 foot diameter turntable. Two turnouts are for future bridge/trestle access to similar narrow gauge layouts. A circuit of the layout is 22 feet long, and 5 circuits make a scale mile (110 feet). Electric Dual Cab Control enables any two engines to be run simultaneously (but not on the same electrical section). There is no double-heading of trains.

The layout shown today features metallic ores brought down from the Silverton area for smelting at Durango, coal for the smelter brought from the Durango City Coal Mine, lumber hauled from the Posta forests for the Durango Sawmills, livestock movements (sheep from Silverton, beef cattle and horses from Farmington) and the general traffic arising from Denver, Farmington and the Rio Grande Southern line. The layout buildings around Durango (Smelter, Station, Freight Depot, Engine House and Coaling Tower) have been modelled on the Denver & Rio Grande originals (some of which have been demolished, altered or rebuilt over the years since 1905).

The rolling stock is mostly of the period but with livery variations. Some D&RGW passenger cars (and Engine 138) have the later 'Bumblebee' (Grande Gold) livery – this livery continues in use today on the Durango & Silverton (a successor line to the D&RGW). Most of the other engines are in Vanderbilt (black) livery and some have silver-grey smokeboxes and chimneys. All the engines are equipped with working headlights. Passenger cars, baggage cars and most cabooses have internal lights.

The layout's all-steam (and mainly coal-fired) Engine Register now totals 20; it comprises two Porter 0-4-0 Switchers, a Porter 0-4-2 wood-fired Switcher, a 2-4-0 Forney with 2 tenders, twelve 2-6-0 Rogers Moguls with tenders, two 4-4-0 Baldwin Americans with tenders (one coal fired and one wood fired), plus the Colorado Mining Corporation's 28 Ton Climax and 14 Ton wood-fired Shay – the latter two are geared articulated tank engines specifically designed for haulage along temporary lightweight tracks such as those typically laid in mining and forestry locations.

The latest engines are coal fired - a 4-4-0 American (D&RGW) and a 2-6-0 Mogul (Denver, South Park & Pacific) and both are based at the Denver Union Station Yard.

Lateral sidepieces have been added to the two existing staging yard extensions leading off from the main layout to increase yard storage capacity. One lateral provides (a) a second bridge link to other On30 layouts (b) the San Juan Division Office at Durango with more car storage and (c) a MOW (Maintenance of Way) Yard for the Division's flanger, snow plows and other MOW stock. A detachable headshunt is available for use when the bridge link is not set up. The second lateral (with some mixed standard and narrow gauge track) comprises Denver Union Station along with passenger and business car storage. A lineside hut with a trolley has been installed in the Durango area of the layout for local permanent way maintenance.

Also running on the layout today are the Rio Grande Southern 'Galloping Geese' (motor cars with articulated trailers converted to run on railroad tracks) together with the Colorado & Southern engine and rolling stock collection belonging to Gosport Group Member Bryan Spencer. Do watch out for these welcome visitors taking their turn at running on the layout. Group Member Kevin Kidney is also helping today.

Bryan is currently building his own narrow gauge layout inspired by the Colorado & Southern and including logging and coal mining activities. On completion his layout will appear at Gosport Group Shows together with two bridges to link his layout to this one. The two bridge links will enable whole trains to be turned end to end round a giant loop (as at the real Durango today) without needing any movements in reverse.

This conveniently brings us round to opportunities today to help run the layout by joining in and doing some of the engine driving yourself. If you are interested in driving today – just ask! Please note that children (at the discretion of the Engineer Staff) may drive an engine provided that they are accompanied by an adult or adults who can supervise them throughout their driving session. If you are new to model railways the American Model Railroad Group hopes that driving an engine here today will encourage you to take up railway modelling as a hobby - one from which you can derive much enjoyment as well as acquiring new friends and the skills for undertaking the construction and operation of a layout of your own. If model railroading appeals to you then you are most welcome to come along and join us!

Bryan, Kevin and I would like to thank you for not only coming to the American Model Railroad Group Show today but also for the interest you have shown in our joint American Narrow Gauge display. We are in the Group's 'O' Scale Narrow Gauge (On30) Section and our motto is 'Narrow of Gauge but not of Mind' so do please feel free to give advice and ask questions – your views will be appreciated.

John Feltham (Member of: American Model Railroad Group - Gosport, Slim Gauge Circle and the British Region's Solent Sub-Division of the National Model Railroad Association (USA))