

Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway

NEWSLETTER 20 - AUGUST 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 DRGW 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 its 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 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 independently simultaneously (but not on the same electrical section). Double-heading and/or banking of trains is possible provided that the power required does not exceed that available to any section.

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 graphite-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, twelve 2-6-0 Rogers Moguls with tenders, three 4-4-0 Baldwin Americans with tenders (one engine is 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, quarrying and forestry locations.

The DRGW has purchased a 4-4-0 Baldwin American for use at Durango and for hire out on a daily basis to the RGS in place of the C&S Forney which has been sold.

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. Awnings have been built for the Team and RIP (Repair In Place) Tracks alongside the Durango Marshalling Yard.

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 on the layout. Bryan is also running his G Scale Narrow Gauge trains today near my On30 layout with opportunities for Show Visitors to drive his engines on request.

Bryan is building his own On30 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 On30 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 thus saving a lot of time and enabling more trains to be set up and run.

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 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 On30 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, the Slim Gauge Circle and the British Region's Solent Sub-Division of the National Model Railroad Association (USA) 'Sharing Know-how')