

## Open House at the Swiss Flat Ry

It was a great evening at Jan and Rae Zweerts houseboat. The weather was damp and mild. Rae made great chili and the house certainly reflected that Christmas time had arrived here. The decorated Christmas Ships paraded past on the river as scheduled, and the Swiss Flat Ry was in full operation. There seemed to be more lighted ships this year than in some of the previous years.

The Swiss Flat Ry resides on a small barge on the river side of Jan and Rae's houseboat. The motif

and theme of the railway is Swiss/European. The railway can be controlled remotely from an operating center located at a window in the bedroom which overlooks the the operation. Jan has much of the right of way illuminated with rope lights. There are three independent loops for railway operations. Serious derailments must be avoided because divers are not standing by if a train were to plunge over the edge of the barge into the river.



A "Crocodile" electric locomotive pulls a passenger train up the grade and into the "snow". This loop is powered from a catenary.



Jan was able to add several buildings last year



Jan Zweerts chats with guests while they devour Rae's chili.

## The First Model Railway

### From Wikipedia

A **Birmingham Dribbler** or carpet railway describes the very first model railways. It is a bit of a misnomer, as the railway featured a model live steam railway locomotive, but no track — the locomotive was simply run across the floor. They first appeared in the 1840s and became very popular Victorian model railway toys.



A ‘Birmingham Dribbler’, Stevens Dockyard, England, around 1890

The steam locomotives were very simple, usually made in brass, with a simple oscillating cylinder driving the main wheels. They were basically a boiler mounted on wheels, although simple decoration (usually bands of lacquer) was sometimes applied. Track was not used — the boiler was filled with water, the burner lit, and when steam was being produced, the locomotive was placed on the floor and allowed to run until either the water ran out or the engine crashed into the furniture. Very quickly, after a number had exploded, simple safety valves were fitted.

They quickly gained the nickname of Birmingham Dribblers, as they had the unfortunate habit of leaving a trail of water behind them as they ran across the floor. Very often this trail would be mixed with the fuel used for the burner, and there were numerous incidents of fires caused by the locomotive crashing into furniture and over-turning so that the burning fuel was spilled over the floor. The fuel inside has also been known to explode, but this is in-

credibly rare. As time passed, embellishments were added, such as wooden buffer beams, buffers and steam whistles.

Not all Birmingham Dribblers are Victorian antiques. In the 1980s and 1990s, a brass, self-assembly kit for a Birmingham Dribbler model was manufactured by Maxwell Hemmens Precision Steam Models of Yorkshire, UK.

### Other Historical notes

The oldest known railway society is **The Model Railway Club** (established 1910), near Kings Cross, London, UK. As well as building model railways, it has 5,000 books and periodicals. Similarly, **The Historical Model Railway Society** at Butterley, near Ripley, Derbyshire specialises in historical matters and has archives available to members and non-members.

The **National Model Railroad Association** (NMRA), USA is the largest model railroad organization in the world.

The following is from R. W. Abernathy, August 2004:

*People began making models of railroad cars shortly after creation of the real things in the mid-18th century. The first complete train “system”, however, was not available until 1891, when Märklin, a German company, introduced a series of standard track gauges, track sections, locomotives, rolling stock, and matching accessories. By 1900, Märklin was producing four different gauges. In the past 100 years, that number has mushroomed.*

*\* 1891–First complete model train set is available*

*\* Germany as an industry leader until WWI*

*\* 1950’s–Models marketed especially for fathers & sons*

*Initially, model trains operated by clockwork mechanisms or steam power. By 1914, electricity was the more common means of propulsion.*

*With Märklin leading the way, Germany dominated the model railway industry until the onset of World*

*War I, when war closed off Germany's export access to its main markets. As a result, model train industries expanded worldwide, with Lionel, Ives, and American Flyer dominating in America. Between the wars, the HO and S scales emerged as a response to the desire for smaller gauges than the venerable O scale. After 1945, plastic began to replace tinfoil as the primary construction material. In addition, model trains captured the hearts of fathers and sons alike, and manufacturers continued developing smaller scales. The 1950s were the banner decade for model railroading, as manufacturers targeted those fathers and sons. The boom was short-lived, however, as the development of slot cars in the 1960s reduced overall toy market share for model train manufacturers.*

*Model train manufacturers rebounded in the 1970s while developing the N and Z scales. Today, the model railroad industry remains strong, with a wider range of scales than ever, and with a commitment to technological advances.*

## **Additional Comments on "G" Scale** **By Allan Warrior** **(Reprinted from June 2007)**

Gauge is the distance between the inner edges of the rails. The "standard gauge" most widely used by American and European railroads is 1435 mm (four feet, eight and one half inches). Why this distance is the "standard" is a fascinating story that relates back in time to the Roman chariots being wide enough to fit behind the rumps of two horses (some standards never die). G gauge usually refers to track that is 45 mm between the rails. G scale is something entirely different. Scale is always a ratio between the size of the model and the prototype. For example, a scale of 1:32 means that one linear foot on a model is equal to 32 linear feet on the prototype.

G scale is not a single scale, but encompasses several scales. In model railroading, many scales have been popular in the history of the hobby and quite a few are long forgotten except for collectors who pay great sums for those old scale mod-

els when in good condition. Two of those old scales are still with us as Gauge 1 and Gauge 2, although confusion begins to reign at this point.

Gauge 1 also infers a scale of 1:32 and this means that the 1435 mm (8.5 ft) standard gauge is reduced by a factor of 32 resulting in 45 mm model gauge for track. This gauge and scale has been the most used size in English garden railroads for many years. Märklin of Germany was once one of the largest producers of Gauge 1 models, but in the United States they have in recent years concentrated more on HO scale equipment. (Shannon Pratt has one of the largest collections of Märklin Gauge 1 trains and equipment in our area.)

Model Diecasting (MDC) has made a few models of Gauge 1 equipment, but it is a very minor part of their business. MTH is another company that has recently entered the Gauge 1 market with a large number of new products. For those persons with deep pockets, there are several model makers that produce beautiful finescale models in Gauge 1. Finescale models are usually purchased by collectors and are almost never run (display only).

Gauge 2 means the 1435 mm standard gauge is reduced by a factor of 22.5 resulting in 63 mm model gauge for track. However, no one makes 63 mm track or wheels gauged to run on this track. The scale for Gauge 2 is 1:22.5. Manufacturers of this scale of models build them to run on 45 mm track. They don't call it Gauge 2n (narrow gauge), but simply indicate the scale.

LGB is a German firm that did much to promote garden railroading. After LGB declared bankruptcy in late 2006, some of their products have not been available. Many of their products are now coming back on the market. They make reliable trains designed to run indoors or outdoors. Many of their first products were modeled after German prototypes that run on 1000 mm narrow gauge and scaled to 45 mm model gauge for track. As their product line increased and they

began making models for the American market, they have opted to continue with a scale of approximately 1:24 for models of standard gauge railroad equipment, but still running on 45 mm track. This practice makes their models larger than a true Gauge 1 model that also runs on 45 mm track. Their models are really closer to Gauge 2n (narrow gauge), but no one designates them that way.

Bachman is a well-known manufacturer of HO trains who also makes some G scale model trains in a scale of 1:22.5 that run on 45 mm track. Their special 45 mm steel track can not be used outdoors, but their trains will run on the track of other manufacturers. Bachman also makes high quality and detailed "Spectrum" G scale logging locomotives in 1:20.5. These locomotives run on 45 mm track as narrow gauge.

Hartland Locomotive Works and Accucraft both produce pre-1900 era quality narrow gauge locomotives and equipment in scales of 1:22.5 to 1:20.5. Berlyn indicates a scale of 1:20.3 on some of their models.

It gets more confusing. A few years ago, someone wrote to Lewis Polk asking him why Aristocraft chose 1:29 as the scale for their products rather than the 1:32 scale that is the correct scale for 45 mm track. His reply follows:

*"Dear All,*

*It's very simple. My father was a Lionel fanatic and lived in Irvington, NJ, where Lionel's factory was. He was a major distributor of their product and loved Standard Gauge. Lionel's standard gauge was 1:29 and did not run on Gauge 1 track, so it too was out of scale for the track size.*

*My father, Nat, had sold LGB for many years too and knew it was out of scale for U.S. sizes being sized to meter gauge, not 3'. Therefore, like OO in England he concluded that the track size was not the most important thing in Large Scale and requested 1/29. We made models in 1/32, 1/24 and 1/29, which was the one with the WOW! factor just as Lionel's Standard Gauge was in it's time.*

*The fact that there was millions of miles of Gauge 1 track laid already meant that we needed to make our trains run on Gauge 1 tracks in order to be commercially viable in Large Scale. The common factor in Large Scale today is the we all run on Gauge 1 track in spite of many scale philosophies.*

*When we started there was only LGB and Kalamazoo and neither were in 1/32 scale or 1/20.3. We made a commercial decision based on the WOW of outdoor train size that had side benefits. It was 3x's HO, it matched LGB more or less and they had 99% of the market at the time. It also matched Lionel's Standard Gauge, so with a change of trucks [our products] could run with Lionel Standard Gauge layouts.*

*That's it in a nutshell. 13 years later it's still working.*

*All the best,  
Lewis Polk"*

Aristocraft purchased Delton Models awhile ago and continues to make their "Delton" classic models in a scale of 1:24. The Delton models are intended to be narrow gauge models.

USA Trains also has chosen a scale of 1:29 for their models. Many of their earlier rolling stock models scale out at slightly smaller than 1:29, but all of their recent "as good as it gets" models are accurately scaled at 1:29.

To add to the confusion, modelers have also introduced other narrow gauge scales that run on 45 mm track.

Many garden railroaders do not worry about consistency of scale and operate equipment from various manufacturers on their layouts. This practice is entirely proper because the object of the hobby is to have fun and be relaxing. Those wishing to explore the outer limits can join the philosophy of A.W.N.U.T.S. (Always Whimsical Not Usually To Scale) group of modelers at one end of the spectrum or Finescale Railroading at the other end of the spectrum. It is your railroad; operate what suits you.

## Schedules & Timetables for 2011

Make sure you check the calendar on our Website at <http://www.rcgrs.com/> for the most up-to-date schedules and timetables.

It is our Society's policy to attempt to have an event or open house on every second Saturday of the month. Other and additional dates during a month are also available and encouraged. Anyone interested in having an Open House or sponsoring an event, please contact **Tom Gaps 503-659-8893, [tgaps@comcast.net](mailto:tgaps@comcast.net)**

**January 9th, Sunday, 2:00 to 6:00 p.m.:** Open house at Shannon & Millie Pratt's home, 6677 SW Bancroft Way, Portland, OR 97225. 503-2929464

Shannon's indoor Marklin railroad with "Party Town" and "Farmdale" will be in operation. The trackage is very dense, but traffic is carefully controlled by electronic block signals which enables three or four trains to be operated simultaneously in limited space.

Host will provide liquid refreshment. Guests bring:  
A-F Main Dish  
G-P Side Dish  
Q-Z Desert

**January 15, Saturday: Annual meeting.** The Columbia Gorge Model Railroad Club has graciously offered to let us hold our annual meeting at their club house, 2505 N. Vancouver Ave, Portland, OR 97227, 503-288-7246.

12:00 Doors Open

01:00 Potluck

----- Club Provided Main Dish - Spiral-Cut Ham  
----- Coffee & water will be provided by the club.  
----- Members may bring an alternative NON-Alcoholic beverage of their choice.

----- A-G Deserts

----- H-O Salads

----- P-Z Side Dishes and Bread

02:00 Annual Business Meeting

03:00 HO Club Open for display

04:00 Clean Up

----- Put everything away

----- Turn off lights

----- Lock the door

Note: To minimize cleanup, the club will be providing paper plates, cups and plastic ware.

**February 18-20:** The Great Train Exposition of 2011

**2nd weekend April:** Event and host? (quarterly meeting)

**2nd weekend May:** Event & host?

**June 11, Saturday:** Tom and Betty Gaps open house.

**June 18, Saturday:** "Railroads In The Garden Summer Tour" 2011. Bill Derville, Chairman

**June 21 - 25:**

2011 NGR Convention.in Overland Park, Kansas

**July ??:** Bill and Brenda Derville open house (quarterly meeting)

**August 6 - 9:** Glacier National Park Trip

**August 13, Saturday:** Bill and Jean Dippert open house.

**September 10, Saturday:** (quarterly meeting) Jeff and Dianne Lange open house.

**October 8, Saturday:** Ron and Merlene Bacon open House.

**November 12, Saturday:** Annual RCGRS Luncheon

**December** Christmas ships?