

“Narrow Gauge”

Introduction

I became interested in Narrow Gauge when Mervyn put a question to us in the April 2004 newsletter asking which other station in the country was known as Parks Station. It turned out to be one of the 2ft narrow gauge line stations between Knysna and Deepwalls, operated by the South Western Railway Company. I once worked in Knysna (in my youth!) and also stayed in Gouna, near Deepwalls, but at the time had other interests than chasing down a narrow gauge railway line!

24 Inches Apart

This led me on a narrow gauge trip to learn more about the other Parks Station. I bought the book *24 Inches Apart* by Sydney Moir from Lionel Penning and discovered the HOn30 Home Depot (www.hon30.org) on the web, which led to the linked HOn30 Yahoo Group where Dirk introduced himself. These two sources of information helped me a lot to establish that narrow gauge is alive and well, and had been ‘living comfortably’ without my knowledge for a long time.

HOn30 or HOn2½ & Bob Hayden

Two of the most influential modellers, Bob Hayden & Dave Frary (see the various MR articles over the years including one of the Model Railroader books: *222 Tips For Building Model Railroad Structures* published by Kalmbach Books), were pioneers in modelling Maine 2 ft narrow gauge in HO scale. When they started, very few items were available and most locomotives and rolling stock had to be scratchbuilt. With the growing popularity of N Gauge mechanisms, a whole new world opened up for the HOn30 modeller. HOn30 or HOn2½ & HOe are HO (1/87) scale trains (3.5mm to the foot), which run on N Gauge (9mm) track while OO9, is 4mm to the foot which also run on 9mm track – (HOn30 stands for 30 inches and HOn2½ for 2’6” which is the same). On the other hand, HOm (prototypical for 3’6” Cape Gauge or 1m Gauge in Europe), run on 12mm track. Then again, if you model American 3ft narrow gauge, it is referred to as HOn3, which runs on 10.5mm track.

Today a number of major manufacturers and smaller cottage-type manufacturers cater for the HOn30 / HOe market. There are sufficient models available either as kits (brass, white metal, resin etc) or RTR to make an easy start, however the major attraction of narrow gauge for most people remains the ability to scratchbuild / kit bash your own locos and rolling stock.

On30

It seems that the fastest growing narrow gauge scale in the United States is On30 (1/43), the big brother of HOn30. On30 is an O scale train (¼” to the foot) on HO Gauge (16.5mm) track. The ability to make use of reliable HO scale mechanisms and track is therefore a big advantage. There are a number of major manufactures, which have seen the opportunity to enter or expand into this market. Bachmann have recently started rolling out new On30 locomotives and rolling stock, while Fleischmann have a great following with their Oe (1/48) Magic Train series which is aptly suited to narrow gauge. At some stage even Marklin (3 rail!) produced some Oe narrow gauge items. The advantages of On30 compared to HOn30 are numerous and a number of people have migrated to the larger scale from HOn30 / HOn2½.

I hope that Dirk and myself can share some of our experience with Narrow Gauge with you here today and hopefully we will see a lot more narrow gauge layouts in the future.



The Orenstein & Koppel 150HP Wood Burner 0-8-0 of 1907
South Western Railway Co
Knysna 2 ft Forest Railway – www.herman.rula.co.za
(photo Hannes Paling)



New Bachmann On30 : 2-8-0 Baldwin Outside Frame Consolidation



New Roco HOe : BR99