

Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway

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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 50 mile branch line from Durango to Farmington in New Mexico and on the Rio Grande Southern 162 mile line between Durango and Ridgway. The layout includes the Durango Railway & Realty Company which ran the local electric trolley route from Durango to nearby Animas.

The layout thus represents some of the railroads and a considerable proportion of the Three Foot Gauge track mileage once existing at the high altitudes (up to 10,000 feet plus) found in the Rocky Mountains in the 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 located 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). An electric Dual Cab Control system enables any two engines to be run independently and there is sufficient power to permit either double-heading or banking of trains when required.

The layout shown 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, Ridgway and the electric trolley line out to Animas.

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 cars (and Engine 138) have the later 'Bumblebee' (Grande Gold) livery still 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 smoke boxes and chimneys. All engines are equipped with working headlights. Combines, Passenger and Baggage cars and most of the Cabooses have working internal lights.

The layout's Engine Register now totals 21 (coal-fired steam unless otherwise specified) and comprises two Porter 0-4-0 Switchers, a Porter 0-4-2 wood-fired Switcher, twelve 2-6-0 Rogers Moguls, three 4-4-0 Baldwin Americans (one wood-fired), plus the Colorado Mining Corporation's special engines – a 28 Ton Climax and a 14 Ton wood-fired Shay (both these are geared articulated tank engines designed for haulage along temporary lightweight tracks such as those typically found in mining,

quarrying and forestry locations). Finally, the Durango Railway & Realty Company electric trolley (No. 5) runs between the Smelter and the D&RGW San Juan Depot.

On the layout today fellow Club Member Bryan Spencer and I are running a number of the bulk freight trains seen on the D&RGW's rail network which were associated with commercial life in the Rockies in the early 20th Century. We have the coal and lumber trains of the Colorado Mining Co arriving in Durango for the smelter and sawmill operations, oil tanker trains from the Farmington wells going on to Denver but run here by the Colorado & Southern, gold and silver ore trains hauled from the mines all the way to Durango by the Silverton Northern (although usually D&RGW hauled from Silverton onwards), trainloads of sheep coming down for the winter around Durango and south towards Farmington but travelling as far as Durango on the Rio Grande Southern, and beer and general goods trains from Denver to Durango on the D&RGW to distribute by rail from there.

Taking part in this activity on the layout today are the Colorado & Southern engines and rolling stock (plus the RGS 'Gallopings Geese' motor cars and trailers adapted to run on narrow gauge track) belonging to Club Member Bryan Spencer. Do watch out for these welcome visitors taking their turn on the layout.

Bryan is building his own On30 narrow gauge layout inspired by the Colorado & Southern and which includes 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 brings us round to opportunities for you to help run the layout by doing some of the 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, trolley or 'Goose' if they are accompanied by an adult or adults who can supervise them throughout their driving session. If you are new to model railways the Gosport Model Railroad Club hopes that driving 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 in general appeals to you then you are most welcome to come along and join us – we are not just American!

Bryan and I would like to thank you for not only coming to the Gosport Model Railroad Club Show today but also for the interest you have shown in our joint On30 (1:48) scale American Narrow Gauge display. We are in the Club's Narrow Gauge Section and our motto is 'Narrow of Gauge but not of Mind' so do feel free to give advice and ask questions – your views will be appreciated.

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

Visit our Club website: www.gosportrailroadgroup.org.uk and see our On30 photos.