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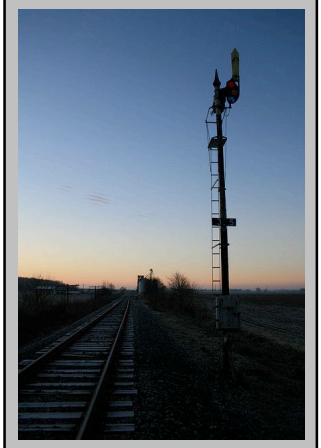
The Semaphore

North County Model Railroad Society/ (760) 722-7366



From The Interlocking Tower

Year in Review

Directors and Officers: We just had our annual combined Christmas party and December business meeting. It was a great party by the way. See side bar pictures. The one required business item at the December meeting is to elect three Directors for the coming year. Those present at meeting elected Bruce Sutherland and me to serve again and Tom Ashton who will move from VP to serve as our third director. After the meeting the directors appointed Al Cuevas President, Nick Ruddick Treasurer, and Burt Gray Secretary, to serve again as Officers and added Harold Helland to serve as Vice President. I would like to offer a special thanks to these members some of whom have served as Directors and or Officers for six years or more.

Membership: I am happy to report that membership has increased dramatically over the last six months. New members who have joined during that time period include Rich Blankenship, Chris Fletcher, John Harper and son Chris, Mitch Meyer, Dave Mork, and Paul Tyner and son Brett. All of these new members have been through an orientation session and are working on or have completed the training required to operate on the mainline. Most of these new members are actively working with scenery group. Please get to know these new members and make them feel welcome.

Website: During the past year Nick Ruddick has completely redone our website. It's a different format that allows members to post articles and club related information. Check it out.

Scenery: The scenery team headed by Harold Helland has been very busy on the layout especially in the Elliston area. Harold leads a monthly Wednesday scenery meeting that has been well attended and work sessions every Wednesday. If you want to have some input regarding scenery design or construction plan to attend the monthly scenery meeting.

Operations: The monthly operation sessions continue to get better each month thanks to John Stevens and his capable crew. The addition of Ellison yard has allowed us to conduct a more prototypical railroad operation and involve more operators. If you haven't been part of one of these sessions I urge you to attend.

Clinics: The Club held two clinics in the last quarter one on Air Brushing and Weathering presented by Bob Deathridge and a second on how to make Trees and Weeds presented by Bob Hart. They were both excellent and well attended by members and visitors. Chris Fletcher wrote a nice article on the second clinic which I hope gets posted on our website. I am told that more clinics are planned for the New Year. Thanks to everyone involved for putting these clinics together. I know it takes a lot of time and effort.

Events: In addition to clinics we continue to be active in onsite and offsite events. Early in the year we set up our kids demonstration railroad (Show-N-Go) for a weekend at Earthgrown Market and at the Del Mar Train Show in December. The Del Mar Train Show was a big success thanks to Chris Davis and his team. We continue to make our twice-yearly trip to the OERM (Perris) swap meet in search of those bargains that we just can't do without. After the swap meet we will occasionally drive on up to Cajon Pass for some serious railfanning. "The Friends of the Oceanside Library" included us again this year on their Christmas home tour in early December raising money for the Oceanside Library. It was a great day. We had almost 200 visitors. Many said some very nice things about NCMRS. We continue to be active in Operation Lifesaver. Thanks to Jay Sarno, Leo Valley, and Burt Gray.

As you can see there is a lot going on at NCMRS, thanks to a lot of work by all of you. There is a lot of positive energy in the club with new and current members taking leadership roles. We are definitely doing a lot of things right.

I am looking forward to a very active and exciting 2013.

All Aboard
Dick Miller
Your interlocutor

Quotations

On Certainty:
Facts are many. The truth is one.
Rabindranath Tagore, *poet*

On Action:
Example is leadership
Albert Schweitzer, *physician*

COMING EVENTS

• Operating Sessions: The January operation session is scheduled for Sunday the 13th. First train out at 1:00pm. The session is expected to finish at 5:00pm. Come early if you want to help with track cleaning.

•World's Greatest Hobby on Tour: Feb 9th & 10th, 2013 at the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

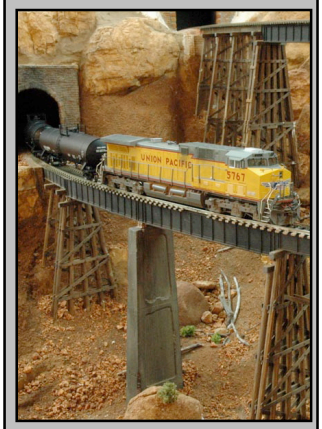
•Perris (OERM) Swap Meet: March 2nd, 2013

•Railfanning Cajon Pass: After the Perris Swap Meet: Details to follow.

SUPPLIERS – THE GOOD & THE BAD

Wholesale Trains: Bill Daley recommends Wholesale Trains as a great supplier. He says if you can find what you are looking for they will often have the lowest price. Check them out at www.Wholesaletrains.com

Members, if you have had an exceptionally good or bad experience with a vendor let us know and we will include your comments in the next issue.



DEPARTMENT HEADS & OFFICERS

Department Heads & Committee Chairmen

Decoder Pro & Test Track Operation	Leo Valley
Electronics & Electrical	Cliff Anderson & Nick Ruddick
Equipment Test & Certification (ETC)	Tom Ashton
Layout Design & Planning	Cliff Anderson
Maintenance Department	Kevin Harper
Membership	Dick Miller
Operations	John Stevens & Charlie Tucker
Public Relations	Vacant
Purchasing	Nick Ruddick
Scenery	Harold Helland
Semaphore Editor & Publisher	Dale Barney
Show-N-Go	Chris Davies & John Castaneda
Training	Al Cuevas & Dick Miller
Web Master	Nick Ruddick

Directors & Officers 2013

President	Al Cuevas
Vice Presidents	Harold Helland
Treasurer	Nick Ruddick
Secretary	Burt Gray
Chairman	Dick Miller
Director	Bruce Sutherland
Director	Tom Ashton

Behind Steam on the Jacobite Express - Continued

During a recent trip to Europe, my wife Lise and I took a train from London to Glasgow, where we were picked up by friends and driven to their home in Rhu, a small town on the banks of the River Clyde, on the West Coast of Scotland. Our friends knew of our interest in railroads, and they had arranged for a trip for the four of us on the "Jacobite Express," operated by the West Coast Railways across the Highlands of Scotland.

We drove to Fort Williams, the largest town in the Highlands, which is in the shadow of Ben Nevis, the highest peak in the United Kingdom. The West Coast Railways has its yard there, with several operational steam locomotives on its roster. The Jacobite Express runs from Fort Williams to Mallaig and back, a distance of 84 miles, passing through Arisaig, the most westerly mainland railway station in Britain. The route passes through beautiful green fields filled with grazing sheep and past lovely Highland villages, with ever-changing views of deep freshwater lochs (lakes) and of the sea.

You are probably already familiar with the West Coast Railway and part of the route of the Jacobite Express from Fort William to Mallig. The Harry Potter films feature a steam-powered "Hogwarts Express". All of the railroad scenes of the Hogwarts Express in the Harry Potter films were filmed in Scotland, using locomotives and antique passenger cars of the West Coast Railway and featuring its longest viaduct, at Glenfinnan.

Number 45407, "The Lancashire Fusilier", at the platform in Fort William. The name is in gold on curved plates above the lead drivers.

We spent the night in Fort William, and boarded the train at the local railroad station, which serves regular passenger trains running between Glasgow and Mallig as well as the daily [from mid-May to the end of October] steam-powered excursion train. Departure was at 10:15AM, but the locomotive and the old cars were at the platform an hour earlier so that railfans could appreciate them. The railroad also runs an afternoon train from early June to the end of August.

The locomotive was built by Armstrong Whitworth Co. in 1937 for the L M S, the London-Midland-Scottish Railway. It has 72 inch drivers, and was used in both mainline freight and passenger service.

Before leaving the Fort William station, Lise stood on the platform and cleaned the outside of the window next to our seats. It was coated with ash and grime from the steam locomotive. We and our friends had first-class seats, two on each side of a table under the window. The table was set for tea, with a nice brass lamp in the window. The coach was carpeted, with fancy brass ceiling lights. All very nice and very comfortable.

The engine crew was very relaxed and welcomed passengers into the cab at the station.


Old photo showing side view of the Lancashire Fusilier

Leaving Fort William, the tracks crossed the Caledonian Canal. A steam-powered fishing boat was moored near the bridge, and the locomotive engineer and the fishing boat captain had a great time engaging in a steam whistle concert.

The mainline from Fort William to Mallig crosses some rugged territory, with steep grades, several tunnels, and some impressive stone viaducts. The longest viaduct is near the town of Glenfinnan. The viaduct has 21 arches spanning a valley. The train stops in Glenfinnan, which houses the West Highland Railway Museum.


Railfans take train photos while the captain fills the air with steam from the whistle.

The entire route is single-tracked, with passing sidings. At Glenfinnan, there is an interesting sign by the side of the track, controlling movements on the single track beyond the station. It says all trains must stop and obtain a token, which the conductor must have in his possession before authorizing the engineer to proceed out of the station. At the next station, the conductor surrenders the token, which can be given to the next train going in the opposite direction. As long as the train crews follow the rules about proceeding only when they have the token, the danger of a collision – either head-on or from the rear – is eliminated, because only one train can be running on the single track at any time.


The Glenfinnan Viaduct. Recognize it from the Harry Potter films?

The train terminates at the beautiful fishing village of Mallaig. The track ends right at the main street. There is an escape track for the locomotive to run around the train, but no way to turn the engine.

Mallaig supports a large fishing fleet, and is the port for car ferries out to the Isle of Skye. There is an hour and a half between arrival and the departure of the return run to Fort William. There is a rich choice of restaurants, pubs and shops in the village. We had a great lunch of very fresh fish in a waterside restaurant with a view of the harbor, fishing boats and the ferry slip, with the Isle of Skye in the distance. Then back on the train for the return run, tender first, back through the Scottish countryside.

The end of the line in Mallaig.

The stop sign at Glenfinnan Station.


Mallaig. The dark hill to the left is the Isle of Skye.

SPEAKING OF DCC...

What Are Configuration Variables (CV's) In a Locomotive Decoder?
By Leo Valley

Configuration Variables (CV's) are memory locations inside the locomotive decoder. They can be set (programmed) to changeable values that will configure the locomotive to run the way you want it to run. Once programmed these values will be retained, even when power is removed, until you decide to change their values. In both non-sound and sound decoders, there are specific CV's that do the same thing in every decoder and these are discussed below. Although some very basic decoders use as few as 15 CV's while sound decoders with many functions may use more than 150 CV's.

Almost all decoders manufactured since 2001 are capable of providing more than the very basic functions. Many of the recent decoders have many more refinements, but detailing them is beyond the scope of this article. For these refinements you need to refer to the documentation that comes with the decoder for implementation. Experimentation will result in you being able to set up your locomotive to perform just the way you want it. If you are installing a new decoder, setting only the CV's listed below will result in your loco running close to prototypical.

Let's discuss the THREE Most Important CV's –

1. CV's 17 & 18 contain the four-digit address (called the "Long Address") and that is the protocol that we use on our Club NCE DCC System.
2. CV 29 is a very special CV that provides some basic set-up features for the decoder. By loading (setting) specific values into CV 29, you enable or disable these features. The specifics for CV 29 are detailed below. The features available for each decoder, for using CV 29, are listed in the documentation provided by the decoder manufacturer.

Before we look at specifics, let's first define SOME DECODER TERMINOLOGY -

Default CV's - Every decoder comes from the manufacturer with a default (factory set) address of 03 (this two-digit value is called the "Short Address" and is set in CV 1). The decoder can be installed and run using that address with all other CV settings left set at the factory default. This is true for a decoder that you install or for factory installed decoder. But for self installed decoders, not tweaking some of the other CV's may cause your locomotive to run more like a toy train rather than prototypical like real trains.

Long Address – This is a four digit address assigned to the decoder (stored in CV 17 & 18) and is the protocol used at our club. Only commands sent out to the address that has been set into the decoder will be decoded (interpreted) by the decoder.

Momentum - When real trains start and stop, they do it slowly because of the massive weight to power and traction ratio. Our model locomotives have a much higher power to weight ratio and therefore can start and stop much quicker. Momentum is used to cause the loco to start and stop like the real ones – as if they are pulling tons of cargo.

Speed Steps – Our Club NCE System primarily uses the 28 Speed Step Standard. 28 Speed Steps means that the decoder senses speed change, from throttle off to throttle full on, in 28 increments. Our Club system is also capable of supporting the 128 Speed Steps which means that the decoder senses a total of 128 increments in speed change from throttle off to throttle full on. The 128 Speed Steps allows for a finer control of speed and most decoders built since 2001 support the either 28 or 128 Speed Steps and our NCE System supports either by manual selection on the throttle.

Now let's describe THE BASIC CV's that are available in almost every decoder.

CV 29 - Configuration Register Data. The values entered for this CV controls the following characteristics:

- 2 digit (short) or 4 digit (long) addressing
- Normal direction of travel
- Speed Step Control
- Analog Mode Conversion ON or OFF
- Whether a user defined Speed Table is turned ON or OFF (Not available on some basic decoders)

CV 1 – Short Address. This CV contains the 2-digit short address discussed in Defaults CV's above.

CV 2 - Start Volts. This sets how much power a loco receives to get it starting to move – this is usually set for movement at Speed Step 1.

CV 6 - Mid Volts. This sets the speed the loco will be going at the Middle Speed Step e.g. Step 14 for 28 Speed Steps (or Step 64 if using 128 Speed Steps). ***NOTE:*** Some basic function decoders do not support this CV.

CV 5 - Top Volts. This sets the top speed of your loco e.g. Step 28 (or Step 128 if using 128 Speed Steps).

CV 3 - Acceleration. This is first half of momentum described above and controls the rate at which the decoder increases the locomotive movement from one Speed Step to the next in response to a new throttle command to increase speed.

CV 4 - Deceleration. This is the other half of momentum described above and controls the rate at which the decoder decreases the locomotive movement from one Speed Step to the next in response to a new throttle command to decrease speed.

CV 19 – Consist Address. If a locomotive has been set up to run in a consist, each locomotive in the consist is assigned the same consist address by programming CV 19. To deactivate the consist address and restore normal operation for each locomotive, CV 19 must be set to equal 0 (zero) by properly "killing" the consist. ***Important Note:*** If your locomotives have been set to run in a consist, before removing them from the layout, verify that you can address each locomotive individually. If they do not respond, chances are that CV 19 has not been reset to 0.

In addition, if the you are installing a sound decoder (rather than factory installed), specific CV's must be set to co-ordinate the chuffing of a steam locomotive or the diesel RPM sound relative to the locomotive speed, plus you can select the type of whistle or horn, the volume of the sounds, etc. Since these are specific and/or unique to each manufacturer and type of locomotive, refer to the decoder documentation for these settings. ***IMPORTANT NOTE:*** If the locomotive comes with a sound decoder factory installed, normally you do not want to change these values since they are set to correspond to that type of locomotive.

There are many other functions that can be controlled by the more comprehensive decoders such as ditch lights, Rule 17, start-up sounds, etc. which again are beyond the scope of this article. Here again refer to the decoder documentation to implement these functions.

One last thought – Using the computer program Decoder Pro is an easy way to set up or modify any of the CV's on your locomotive. The current released update of Decoder Pro is maintained on the computer system for the test tracks. Another advantage of using Decoder Pro to set CV's is that it can be used to record and store the CV settings for your locomotive and in the event that a CV or multiple CV settings are nullified, they can be easily reset to the desired value by using the Decoder Pro restore feature.

IMPORTANT NOTE: To preclude inadvertently nullifying decoder settings, it is a good practice to remove track power before setting a locomotive on the track or removing it from the track.

Letters to the Editor

I stopped by your train display at the Del Mar Train show. It really looked good. I had never seen it before with the center golf course. One of your members told me that John Castaneda did a lot of the work to freshen up the whole layout including the golf course. It sure looks good. You should keep him on as a member.

The last time I dropped by your club for a visit I was really impressed by the background painting that you have added since my last visit. Wow, those mountains on the North wall really look good.

I keep thinking I should join your club. I know that Mildred would like to get me out of the house for a couple of days a week. The problem is that it's a fairly long drive from Canyon Junction to your club and my old Plymouth doesn't run as well as it used to.

Regards
Ted (Ten) Wheeler
Santa Fe Southern RR
Canyon Junction

Railroad Questions

Railroad Questions:

Get the correct answer to these questions and win a free cup of coffee at the club. Answers found elsewhere in the newsletter.

•What steam engine has a boiler that is not on its horizontal centerline?

•What Company built a steam engine much like the Shay after Shay's patents ran out and what was it called?

New Member profiles

Chris and John Harper

Chris and I live near the former NCMRS location, a storefront in the Cannon Road Ralph's Shopping Center. We often said that we should join, but we never followed up. Nevertheless, it remained on our agenda and once we visited the current operations we couldn't help but join! We were greeted like family on our very first visit! Chris and I have a lifelong love of trains and have made many trips across the country and never miss the various special excursion trains when we travel. We have an HO set at home, but the NCMRS has taken over our passion. Chris is running his ICE train or the Daylight, which we share.

Chris and John joined NCMRS a few months ago and have become active members.

Dale Barney

Like most model railroaders, my love of trains began with the Lionel Santa left one Christmas. That shiny diesel humming around the Christmas tree lit my imagination. Growing up in northern California's central valley, my love of model trains stayed with me through junior high school. High school, girls, college, girls, post-grad. school, and girls took my attention for a number of years. It wasn't until my marriage to my wife Maureen that I reconnected with model railroading. With her encouragement, I found The Model Train Store in Santa Clara and that again opened my eyes to the hobby.

It was a chance meeting and subsequent friendships with master modelers Doug Stone and Tom McCammant that really got me off the sidelines. Their skill and craftsmanship made me want to push myself and my skills. With a couple of trial layouts under my belt, I am now working on a shelf layout that winds its way around the walls of a guest bedroom. I model the Santa Fe centered around the city of Stockton and the nearby central valley. Nothing fancy, it's just something to run my rolling stock. Most of my structures are kitbashed with a couple of custom built thrown in for good measure.

I joined the North County Model Railroad Club many years ago when it was located in a strip mall on Melrose. A busy family life and demanding job only allowed me to be a member for a couple of years. Fast forward to 2008 when Tom McCammant found the club in its current locale. After he joined, it just seemed natural for me to join as well. While time constraints still don't allow me to spend as much time at the club as I like, I feel it's important to stay connected. I haven't met all the club members so please introduce yourself the next time you see me. I'm the tall guy and would be happy to make your acquaintance.