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Issue 10

Volume 21

BANTRAK

Newsletter



N-Scale – Realism in Miniature



Roundhouse View

by John Darlington

**Don't Forget the
Scale Show!**

October

11 & 12

Setup

Friday 10/10

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TRAVELING BANTRAK!

When Mark Bandy asked me to substitute for him this month due to a problem with his computer, and having missed the last meeting while on vacation, I wondered what I would write about. Then Al Palewicz came to my rescue with his article found elsewhere in this Newsletter. It came to me that some of us have been fortunate over the years to have traveled to other countries, and to have the opportunity to see their railroad systems in person. Al describes his railroad adventures in Rome with its busy railway network while I had the benefit of seeing a much more docile railroad system in Ireland. Two important EU countries with completely different ideas about the use of railroad systems to further their respective economies..

While I will let Al's column speak for itself, I know from first hand observation that the Italian rail operation is a very multi-faceted system of freight and passenger transportation. It is interesting to note that Ireland is completely different in this respect, devoting almost its entire system to passenger service. There are a number of reasons for this. First of all, Ireland is a very small country, and while its economy is one of the EU's stars, it is still has a fairly light industrial base which is more adaptable to motor rather than rail transport. Secondly, most of the rail that I observed is fairly light and could not stand up to the heavy weight of freight traffic. To convert even this modest rail system to freight use would have to be economically viable which their present industrial base could not justify. Lastly, the only city of any real size (over 25,000 people) is Dublin, with its 1.5 million inhabitants, which does not lend itself to expensive freight service by rail.

With all of this in mind, it is interesting to note that Ireland's road network is made up of what we would consider secondary roads. Further observations indicated that, outside of Dublin, what we call heavy truck traffic does not exist.. I saw more tourist busses during the day than large commercial vehicles. This leaves one with the question, "How does Ireland do so well economically?" The answer is that they concentrate in a few major industries such as computer software development, woolen goods and crystal and glass manufacturing, none of which require heavy truck or rail usage. It is still a charming country, one of just a few left to enjoy.

I am enclosing a few photographs of the Dublin Train Station and its motive power and rolling stock on a subsequent page.

John

Our Next Meeting

Our next BANTRAK Club meeting will be held on Sunday October 19th at John Darlington's home in Timonium

2PM to 5PM

Map Attached



RIP TRACK

Now Is The Season

By Phil Peters

Autumn is finally here and the gardens are drawing their blooming season to a close. In a few weeks it will be time to pull up the dead annuals, clean up the dead leaves and shut the garden down for the winter. But don't be so hasty to throw things on the compost heap. There is still some life in those stalks yet.

Many of the plants we use in the garden or we see in the field have a fine structure that, if dried and trimmed properly, can furnish material for trees, dead or alive, on the layout.

Many of the plants we use in the garden or we see in the field have a fine structure that, if dried and trimmed properly, can furnish material for trees, dead or alive, on the layout

We often hear of Baby's Breath, *Gypsophila* spp., as an excellent source of delicate stems. One model magazine has recently had a letter about one reader who takes it out of discarded funerary displays in a graveyard to forest his layout! If you have it in your garden, or in the neighbor's, you can cut the stems, hang them upside down in a dry space until they are thoroughly dry, then paint them an appropriate color. Trimmed properly, several stems can be put together with florist's tape and made into a respectable tree. You can dust them with Woodland Scenics foliage or not before putting them on the layout. Don't have it at home? Go to a craft store. You can buy the stuff by the bunch. A couple of bunches and you can have your own Appalachia.

Autumn sedum is also very evident at this time of year. Wait until it has done its thing. Then harvest the branching tops and hang them upside down to dry. Then trim, bind different branches together and paint.

Goldenrod will also give many possibilities for trees structures. There are hundreds of different species of goldenrod and all that grow in the East will be of service. Cut the stems and treat as above, hanging upside down to dry, trim, cluster together with florist's tape and paint.

For the record, goldenrod will not give you an allergic reaction. It is the ragweed and giant ragweed that flowers at the same time that causes the severe allergic reaction people experience. Goldenrod pollen is just too heavy to become airborne. It must be moved by insects, not the wind. However, run your hand over it to remove the dead flowers and any seeds before you bring it indoors.

Don't forget your privet hedge. Some of those branches have a delicate enough structure that they will work either as dead trees in the green forest or give you the basis for adding scenic material to form live trees. And they don't have to be painted.

With all living or formerly living plant material that you bring in from outdoors, make sure it is clean and free of insects and especially, insect eggs before you use it. As someone whose marriage has almost broken up because of some outstanding hatchings of spider and insect egg masses in kitchen drawers, bedrooms, etc., I can attest to the reaction of the human female in the presence of such a prodigality of life. Thousands of baby spiders weaving their webs on your layout will not add Halloween festivity.

By the way, if something neat does hatch out, give me a call. I'd love to take photographs.

Some dried plant people suggest soaking the dried material in glycerin overnight to keep the material somewhat flexible. I don't think this is necessary for our use. And I wouldn't expect paint or glue to adhere to the soaked plant.

Incidentally, hanging the plant material upside down preserves some of the color in the plant. More importantly, it preserves the integral structure of the branches so they don't droop while drying.

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THE (N SCALE) WONDERS OF FLORENCE

By Al Palewicz

In late June this year, my wife and I went to Rome for a pilgrimage with the Archbishop of Baltimore, who was receiving an honor from the Pope. It was a great trip. However, I could not let the time go without arranging at least one model railroading event. Thus, on July 1 we went to Florence, home to some of the greatest art in the world, including Michelangelo's *David*.

We did not look at any Renaissance art on this trip, however. Before we left Baltimore I had contacted our Italian BANTRAK member, Andrea Barella, who lives in Turin. Andrea agreed to meet us in Florence, home not only to great art, but also to Amici Scala N (ASN), the Italian national N scale society. Stephanie and I left Rome via a Eurostar train at 9:50 AM, arriving in Florence at about 11:20. It was a great train ride, made all the more pleasant by the fact that we had no luggage, and so could just get on the train and enjoy the trip. Faster and far more comfortable than the Acela, the Eurostar took us through the Italian countryside in glorious relaxation, arriving in Florence within a minute of the scheduled time. Andrea had to leave Turin much earlier than we left Rome since his trip was nearly four and a half hours long. He departed about 7:30 AM, and arrived in Florence just ten minutes after Stephanie and I got there.

I took some photos in both the Rome and the Florence train stations, not just of our trains, but of some other colorful examples of Italian/European modern train sets. Some of these photos are included with the article.

In Florence, we met up with Giuseppe Berardi, who is a member of ASN, and lives just outside of Florence. Giuseppe provided ground transportation in Florence and acted as our local guide. From the Stazione Santa Maria Novella, we went right to the Ferrovia dello Stato (FS) facility near the Model Railroad Museum and home of ASN. At the FS facility, after meeting up with Luciano, the "grandfather" of the ASN, we were very cordially given a tour of the training site for new FS engineers. The site houses some of the most modern computerized training equipment for this purpose. There are three cabs, each one duplicating a different type of locomotive cab currently in use on the FS. Inside each cab, trainees face a view of the trackage and stations they will be dealing with in their running of trains throughout Italy. It is all computer generated, of course, and crashes and derailments yield only computer announcements that the trainee has failed the test. The equipment puts the train driving programs like TRAINZ to shame. Again, I have put a couple of photos of this location into the article.

From the FS facility we went to the Florence N Scale Museum, run by the Model Railroaders Group of Florence, which includes ASN. The Museum is located in the former train station called Leopolda, after the Grandduke of Tuscany in 1848. In 1994 the station was renovated and turned over to various groups for artistic purposes. Yes, in Florence, model railroading is considered an artistic endeavor. (Move over Michelangelo!) Also on the grounds of the Museum is a repository of former FS locomotives, much like the collection at the B&O Museum here in Baltimore. Inside there are mockups of old train compartments, and other artifacts from 19th century railroading in Italy. Most importantly, there is also a large room for the layout built by our sister club in Florence, the ASN. The layout represents a train running through four countries: Italy, Austria, Switzerland, and Germany.

Of course I took an American train with me to run on this European track. The train I selected was the Burlington Route Pioneer Zephyr. I have run this train set in at least 5 different states of the US, and thought it a worthy representative of American railroading to run in Italy. The Zephyr proudly ran through all four countries of the ASN layout, and stopped in several stations along the way. It was appreciated as a fine model by the 6 or 7 ASN members who saw it run.

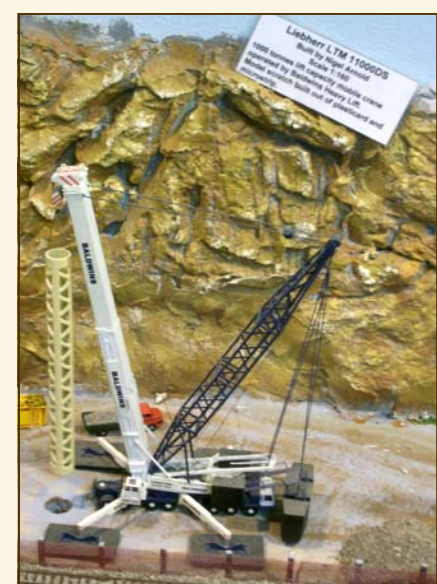
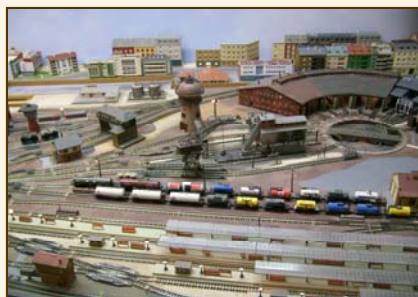
After a wonderful couple of hours at the ASN layout, we all adjourned to a local trattoria for a great lunch, accompanied by a multilingual conversation about trains, N scale, layout building, and the new N scale production company begun recently by Andrea and his partner, Luca Patuzzi. They call themselves the N Scale Pirates, from their company name, "Pi.R.A.T.A., an acronym for Piccole Riproduzioni Artigianale Treni e Affini (Italian Model Railroad Items in N Scale.).) More about that in another article.

After lunch we returned to the Florence train station, where Andrea boarded his train to Turin, and Stephanie and I got on another Eurostar for the trip back to Rome. I have to admit that this train was not on time, as was our first train of the day. Rather it left Florence 50 minutes late, and arrived in Rome 35 minutes late. This was not a problem for us since we were not on a schedule that day. In Rome, though, we were delighted to learn that when a Eurostar runs more than 20 minutes late, everyone on the train is entitled to a 50% rebate of their ticket price. (My last trip to New York on the Acela ran 45 minutes late all the way, and no one offered me anything, not even an apology, for the inconvenience.)

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Our day ended in the shops under the Rome train station where we bought some gifts for people at home, and then took the Rome Metro to our hotel on the outskirts of the city. It was not a usual tourist day in Italy, but we thoroughly enjoyed it. The nicest part was finally meeting Andrea, with whom I have corresponded by email for more than 5 years, and getting to know several other members of our sister club in Italy, the Friends of N Scale. In another article I will describe in more detail the work Andrea and his partner, Luca Patuzzi, are doing in developing some limited production N scale products of Italian railroad trains and equipment. You will see some of their products running at Timonium in October. In appreciation for his help with our model railroading day in Italy, I gave Andrea the B & O 25th Anniversary car. Now we know BANTRAK's fame is international!



Andrea Barella,



OneTrak – One Year On

By Tim Nixon

Back in July during the OneTrak “pre-meeting” before the regular club meeting at Eric Payne’s house, I realized that it had been exactly one year since I brought my original OneTrak module frame with a prototype pair of legs to a club meeting (also at Eric’s house) for comment. With the up-coming October Scale Show being the one year anniversary of the debut of BANTRAK’s OneTrak modules, I thought an article for the newsletter was appropriate to recognize this milestone, and discuss where I see OneTrak heading.

Background

I originally raised the issue of possibly doing OneTrak at the meeting at Jack Walsh’s house way back in February 2005. I had an interest in doing some module scenes that couldn’t properly be reflected in a 3-track Ntrak module, and having seen the original NVNtrak OneTrak modules I wondered whether there was an interest in doing something similar in BANTRAK. A half dozen people approached me after the meeting to talk more about OneTrak, and it appeared there was enough interest to explore the idea further. The OneTrak group held some initial discussions, and it quickly became apparent that everyone had a slightly different idea of what they wanted out of OneTrak. Some saw it as an extension of the Red Line, others as a dedicated line for prototype operations. Some wanted to use Atlas Code 55 track, others Code 80 track. Some wanted to mandate double track, others wanted to allow single tracks. We continued to discuss OneTrak for a couple of months, but with no consensus on approach, and a busy show schedule, OneTrak was put on the back burner for a while.

In January 2006, with the B&O Show and the holidays behind us, OneTrak came back to the fore and discussions resumed. By this time, we had come to more of a consensus on what we wanted “our” version of OneTrak to be. First, we wanted all the modules to reflect a common theme, season and time period, and have them “flow” together, similar to the way Northern Virginia’s “New River Subdivision” modules did. Second, we wanted these modules to reflect a high standard of craftsmanship and appear to be prototypical (although we couldn’t decide on a prototype to model). In March 2006 I put out for discussion a draft set of standards for BANTRAK OneTrak modules based on the original OneTrak standards developed by NVNTrak, incorporating changes based on our member’s interests. These standards underwent numerous versions as the discussions continued, with the final draft not approved until July 2007.

OneTrak continued to alternate between front and back burner status as we honed the standards and tried to decide on a prototype. It wasn’t until March 2007 that this status changed, when it was proposed at the monthly club meeting that the group commit to having modules ready for the October 2007 Scale Show. The group ultimately agreed to this proposal, and thereafter OneTrak went into high gear, with a OneTrak meeting being held at Alan Del Gaudio’s after the April 2007 BANTRAK field trip to Howard Zane’s layout to plan who was building what and how it would all fit together. While most plans were left fluid, John Berger committed to building an end loop, and Eric Payne volunteered his Zoo modules (which had been designed with a OneTrak branch in mind) as the take-off from the Ntrak loop, giving us starting and ending points.

Module construction commenced and continued throughout the summer, with modules planned from John Berger (end loop), Alan Del Gaudio (2-3’ straight modules), Ken Greenhorn (4’ straight module), Ralph Grutzmacher (2-4’ straight modules), Ed Kapuscinski (4’ straight module), Bob Winterbottom (4’ straight module), and myself (2-4’ straight modules). Progress was intermittent, and by late summer it became obvious that a complete and fully scenic’d OneTrak branch would not be possible by October, but at the September meeting the group agreed to proceed with a set-up at the October show to test track and electrical work, as a dry run for a completed OneTrak set-up at the B&O Show.

One of the reasons for the intermittent progress was the issue of how to handle the legs. To this point that was the one part of the standard that still eluded us; to eliminate the need to purchase enough additional expensive fireproof skirting for both sides of all the OneTrak modules, it was proposed that we develop a leg design that was attractive enough that we wouldn’t need skirting. Unfortunately we hadn’t been able to come up with a design. Finally in July, I put together a prototype based on thoughts from Ralph Grutzmacher and Bob Mohr and brought it to the monthly club meeting. Skip Hayes proposed a couple of changes to improve the design, and it was standardized in August. The group held a leg construction workday at John Berger’s home in late September to insure everyone had legs for the October Scale Show. It was at this show, as we were discussing possible layout configurations, that we all realized that with the exception of John’s end loop, we were all building straight modules and without corners we’d be limited to a long peninsula. As a result, I decided to put one of my straight modules on hold and throw together a pair of corner modules to give us some additional flexibility.

First Show – October 2007

OneTrak’s debut at the October Scale Show was definitely a learning experience. The OneTrak branch consisted of a dozen modules; 2-4’ straight modules from Ralph, a 4’ straight from Ed, 2-3’ straights from Alan, a 4’ straight from Ken, 2-30” corners and 1-4’ straight from myself, and John

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Berger's 3-module end loop. The branch connected to the wye on Eric's Zoo module set. This first set-up took much longer than we had anticipated; partially because no one had seen all the modules before, and we had to work out a track plan that would allow some operations. A track plan was worked out and set-up started; we quickly learned that Atlas Code 55 rail joiners are a pain to put on. It took us as long to install one set of Code 55 joiners as it did a whole Ntrak module set of Code 80 rail joiners. Eventually we got the OneTrak mainline hooked up and running, although there were electrical issues with the Ntrak connection which we never did fully resolve.

Since this was the first show for OneTrak we didn't have an assigned OneTrak run slot; those of us in the OneTrak group had planned to take turns operating on the branch. Unfortunately we did a poor job of planning, and on Saturday three of us picked the same time period to run on Ntrak and left the OneTrak branch vacant. Ed, Alan and I operated on the branch sporadically throughout the weekend; regrettably the branch was left vacant much of the weekend.

Overall things worked reasonably well, and we proved the concept. However, for the next show we knew we needed to do much better! Scenery on the modules needed to be completed, the electrical issues addressed, and the run schedule improved.

Second Show – December 2007

Our second show was a much bigger venue; the Festival of Trains at the B&O Museum. The modules were much improved and all featured complete scenery. We also added a couple more modules, including Martin Myer's pair of Ntrak-OneTrak "banjo" adapter modules, and Bob Winterbottom's 4' straight. Set-up priority was given to the Ntrak layout, so work didn't start on the OneTrak branch until Thursday afternoon, and wasn't complete until Friday, and was complicated by some wiring problems.

Operations at the B&O Show were much improved from the first show. Learning from the October Scale Show, we scheduled a dedicated OneTrak operator for the weekends; unfortunately limited manning prevented dedicating an operator to OneTrak during the week. Eric Payne, Steve Hanlon, John Berger, Ed Kapuscinski, Alan Del Galudio and I all operated the OneTrak branch during the show.

Overall, I think things went fairly well at the B&O. Obviously things would have been better if we'd been able to operate during the week; having a long peninsula with nothing happening on it most of the time that people had to walk around wasn't exactly desirable, unfortunately we were limited by both manning and space. From my perspective the biggest drawback was that to fit the OneTrak branch in around the O-Scale layout, we didn't have space for an adapter module, so we could only use one of the banjo modules to access the OneTrak branch. This resulted in the need to do some "wrong way running" to get from the Yard to the OneTrak branch, but I guess that added to the "operational" nature of OneTrak.

Third Show – February 2008

The February Scale Show represented the third OneTrak set-up, and in many ways was the most complete, but was also the smallest, having only 10 OneTrak modules, plus Martin's banjo's and a 2-1 adapter module. Despite setting up in a pouring rainstorm and having to work around leaks in the roof, set-up proceeded quickly and efficiently. The layout was very compact, leaving the Ntrak layout through the banjo's, wrapping around a corner and running down in front of the yard.

At this show, the OneTrak peninsula was operated both as an operations branch line, and as an extension of the Ntrak "Red Line Route", adding another dimension to OneTrak.

What's Next

OneTrak has taken a backseat to Ntrak since the February Show. We had originally intended to operate at the April Scale Show, but either John Berger (end loop) or I (corners) was available for the whole show, so we were missing key modules and unable to put together a layout. After that, we were either dealing with smaller shows (Brunswick and Bedford) or the National N-scale Convention, where there wasn't room for our OneTrak branch.

In preparation for the fall show season, the OneTrak group held a "pre-meeting" at Eric Payne's before the normal BANTRAK July monthly meeting to discuss some of the issues with OneTrak, and decide where we wanted to go. Among the items discussed were the need for more modules, particularly "specialty" modules like junctions, wyes, corners and a dedicated OneTrak yard. We also discussed a desire for some "non-rectangular" modules; most of us are building standard Ntrak-inspired 1'x4' rectangular modules,

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and some of us would like to see more free flowing modules like those in FREMO or NVNtrak's C&O Subdivision OneTrak modules.

Hopefully OneTrak will continue to grow and become a regular part of the BANTRAK layout. Several more members are planning or building modules, and there are two new modules (one from Ed Kapuscinski and one from me) scheduled to debut at the October Scale Show. Eventually we would like to be able to get to the point where we could also set up a OneTrak layout separately at smaller shows where there isn't enough space or member interest to do a full Ntrak set-up; we'll need a number of additional modules and a few more people in OneTrak before we can do that though.

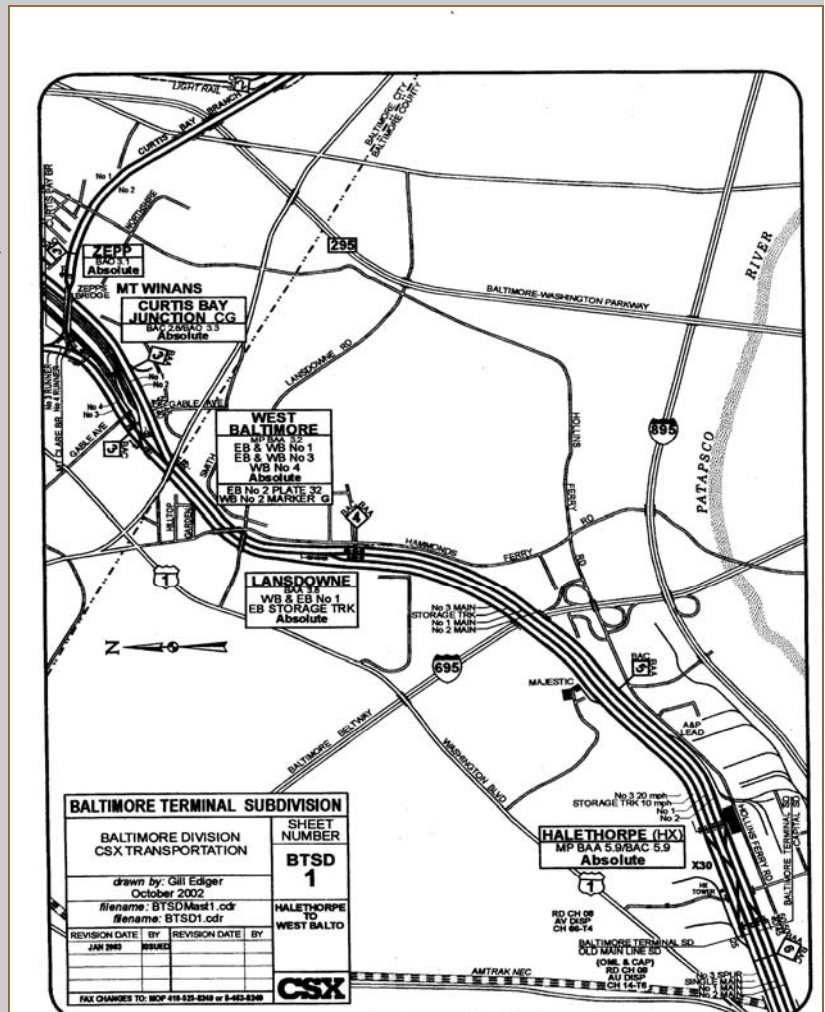
If anyone is interested in learning more about our OneTrak group, our standards can be found on the BANTRAK website, and I'm always ready to answer questions. All club members are welcome to operate on the OneTrak branch (although priority is given to those who have built OneTrak modules); all you need is a DCC-equipped locomotive, a throttle, and rolling stock compatible with Atlas Code 55 track (no MT Pizza Cutters!). See you on the OneTrak branch in October!



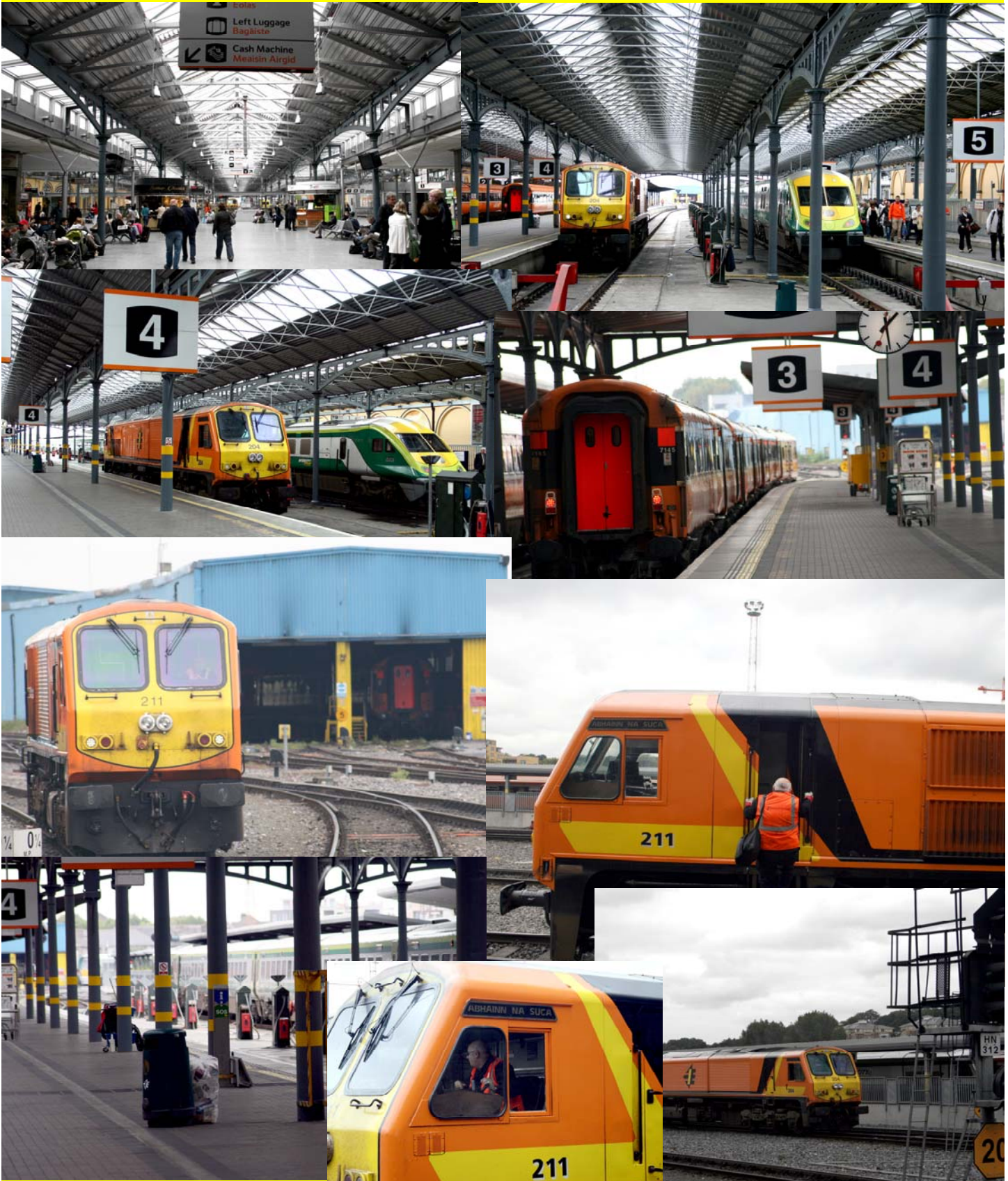
OBSERVATIONS

By Frank Hogarth

Friday after I finished work, I took a little hike for about a mile and found this old rail line near the BALTIMORE DIVISION CSX HEAD-QUARTERS. The tracks crossed the Hollins Ferry Road and pass near some warehouses that are still receiving cars. A portion of these tracks are abandoned and full of weeds. You can get a great rail plan from the street which I obtained from CSX. The tracks were overgrown with trees and sticky bushes (ouch). The rails looked in decent shape considering that some tracks have not been used in over 8 years. The area is in the lower right. (see diagram) Of the tracks north of the crossing of Hollins Ferry Road only the lower ones are used. Only 4 box-cars were in the park at the time I was there. CSXT 130100 128809 130376 were near the Maryland Food Bank and UP 463207 was near another building. When I was finished at this location, I went further down the road to the overpass at Halethorpe Farms Road, and near the old HX tower. I witnessed a freight going north with a mixed consist of revenue cars including two Pan Am cars. Finally I walked to the Montgomery Park building and saw a coal drag with four engines the last of which was the "Spirit Of Grafton". The train was 80 cars long. One of the cars I spotted was CSXT 394006 with a fresh coat of paint.



Random Photos of the Dublin Train Station



.....more pictures



COMING EVENTS

1. The Scale Show @ Timonium, October 11 & 12 (Setup Friday @ 1PM)
2. BANTRAK Club Meeting @ John Darlington's Sunday October 19 @ 2pm
3. B&O Festival of Trains December 13th (Setup TBA)

The BANTRAK Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-Trak Club.

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BANTRAK Newsletter

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