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Canadian Flyer

SUMMER BONUS EDITION

Operating and collecting toy trains

Canadian Toy Train Association operates Modular Layout over three weekends at the Burnaby Central Railway.

Smack dab in the middle of North Burnaby, there are trains. Big trains and lots of them. Not far from where our CTTA meetings take place, the Burnaby Central Railway operate a scenic mini-rail at Confederation Park. There are Birthday Parties and train rides for the public of course, through a very scenic and multiple track layout that passes through tunnels, over bridges, turnouts and across multiple interchanges through forested parkland.

But there's more. More train lovers. Home to the British Columbia Society of Model Engineers (BCSME), these mini-rail trains are more than just a novelty for the curious and fun-loving families to ride on. They are the serious passion of a group that are more than model railroaders, they are model engineers. Some of these folks are also CTTA Members.

The large, modern, battery powered diesel units are striking and impressive, yes. But the steam engines are something special. They are 'live steam'! Powered by propane burners and tanks of water, they produce REAL steam power – enough to drive the engine itself and a trainload of people, a load of more than a tonne! Many of these spectacular engines are hand crafted – lathed and machined just like the real thing.



Our CTTA operating group had a fantastic time, filled with operating trains of 6 different gauges. We made lots of new friends and many of us gained an appreciation for a completely new side of model railroading.

CTTA Layout Operations

Traditionally, our CTTA Modular Layout seems to follow a Fall oriented operating season. Most of the opportunities to participate and have our layout up and running occur around a series of shows in Chilliwack, Lynden, Monroe, CN Family Day, Western Rails and the Vancouver Train Expo. It's a big deal to transport, set up and tear down, requiring a crew of several members. It's always best if we can be set up for multiple days of operations.

This year, we were approached by the BCSME about the possibility of setting up our display in Rainbow Creek Station, as other clubs who run the smaller model railroad gauges have been doing throughout the summer for years. I visited the building with measuring tape in hand to see if our large layout would fit and still leave room for observers to get around the layout. By removing one complete module on each side and returning to our 'pre expansion' set up size of 16' x 24', it was a perfect (but cozy!) fit.



Having the layout up for 6 days gave lots of members a chance to break out personal trains for a few hours on the layout, running along with a fine roster of Club equipment. The Standard Gauge McCoy set and the Thomas train ran non-stop for the entire three weekends! Make sure to check out the new feature on the history of the McCoy Standard Gauge trains in the Club cars section of the Web site.



Big thanks and a shout out to the members who helped with set up, tear down, and three weekends of continuous operations! The ops crew was: Neil Wilson, Tom Modica, Peter Tofield, Martin Howbold, Chuck Laws, Keith Herndier, Gordon Hall, Gary Heald, Tom and Gavin Senft, Gary and Katelon Zabenskie, Neil Whitehead, Peter Berry, Frank Schmidt, Jan Easton, Doug McLeod, Mark Horne and Kyle Miller.

Thomas the Tank Engine a Star of the Show

Deliberately and strategically placed on the outermost O gauge loop of our 5-track layout, Thomas the Tank Engine is always a highlight and massive draw for children and families. This simple train, with the Annie & Clarabel coaches, and sometimes animated giraffe cars, is controlled by the children from one of two elevated platforms, putting the kids above the tracks and close to the action. Operating the train forward and backward instantly generates smiles and draws a crowd. We had a non-stop line of families and children, with giant smiles, eyes popping out and – at times – tears, as it was time to go! I make it a point to offer families a photo opportunity with the train stopped in front of the kids, so there are great memories of our layout. It also gives the adults more time to watch and enjoy the other more realistic trains we run, and we had lots of questions and positive comments from the visitors.



Members run trains!

It was great to see so much classic Lionel postwar trains running! Keith Herndier and Tom had doubleheader steam pulling a long consist of heavy 'lead sled' O-27 cars; Doug had his Scale Hudson, and a N&W 746 made an appearance. Gary Heald had Sante Fe 2333 horizontal motor AA diesels on aluminum passenger duty.

Other tracks also featured long modern era trains. Tom Modica's mighty Sante Fe A-B-A F-unit lash up passenger consist was 11 cars long. Kyle Miller ran a long train of Canadian grain cars and intermodal double-stacks, alternating between CN and CP diesel power. Neil Whitehead had the Great Northern Hustle Muscle freight.

Canadian Pacific passenger trains alternated with Lionel Postwar celebration F3's and the club's 2816 CP steam engine. The Royal Hudson saw duty, as did CN 6060 with another consist of MTH passenger cars.

Frank Schmidt's Crocodile was there as well, along with another fine eclectic selection of his European tinplate!



Garden Railway Operations

A relatively new display at the park is a large, triple-island garden Railway, about 50 feet x 20 feet, that opened in 2018.

The outer island features 3 G scale mainlines of track, the inner large island 3 more G scale loops, with one loop featuring dual gauge track allowing O scale operations. The smaller island at the far end of the Garden Railway features 4 loops for running 3 rail O Gauge or 2 rail O scale trains. CTTA member Gordon Hall has been adding some of the equipment he uses for the CTTA displays he sets up at various train shows through the year, including the show fencing, Atlas track, buildings, tunnels, CTTA sign, a hand pump to operate a wood train whistle and fence-mounted controls for the kids to activate sounds and control trains. He runs LionChief Thomas and Percy, and several freight cars carrying popular kid's TV cartoon characters, including a Slinky dog.



**O gauge section****G gauge section**

Visitors must cross the Mini-rail tracks to gain access to this new attraction. Riders of the mini-rail and Garden Railway operators see each others' trains as they go by. The BCSME folks were delighted to announce counts for visitors to the garden railway were exceeding 800 per day! Most of those folks also paid a visit to our CTTA layout as well.



I paid my first train running visit to the railway after our set up on Friday. Gordon Hall has been running the O garden railway most of the summer; "It is so much fun running trains outside, I can bring both 2 and 3 rail O trains to see them run in a bright open air venue on a large loop, sharing them for the visitors to enjoy, while the families can run control the Thomas trains. It is great having a few CTTA members to chat with or work on projects in the open air while the trains run, waving to passing larger trains loaded with families enjoying the experience."



The Garden Railway is a great new opportunity for CTTA members to enjoy O gauge and G gauge trains outside, with lots of space. Tuesdays 10 am to 3 pm are work party days at the BCSME. You are always welcome to stop by and help with various maintenance, track laying and improvement projects. The machine shops are full and busy. There are several members 'train play days' with meals included each year. You can bring your trains to run on the garden railway!

The BC Society of Model Engineers and the 7 ½" Gauge Operations

CTTA members got exposure to another whole side of model railroading! Those of us who set up our layout on Friday had a chance to ride the large Mini-rail trains around the park with BCSME members, who were having a volunteer appreciation day and Summer BBQ. We were well fed, and then myself and others headed out to the tracks for some live steam and diesel action. The park features over 3 kilometers of mainline track, passing through several interchanges, tunnels, bridges, crossovers and spirals. It's a wonderful and scenic ride.



Chuck Laws and Bruce Johnson both piloted beautiful steam trains and offered us 'cab rides' around the park. We also had a chance to tour the 'shops, sheds and turntable facilities', and see all of the great trains members keep on the site.



The Burnaby Central Railway also celebrated its 90th anniversary while we were there, and local dignitaries and city officials were on hand for ceremonies, congratulations, and train rides. They paid a lengthy visit to our layout and saw the popularity of our Thomas train.

And many thanks to BCSME members Chuck, Bruce, and Junior Engineers Keith Herndier and Jayden, who spent lots of time with us and made sure we were exposed to as much of the operation as possible.