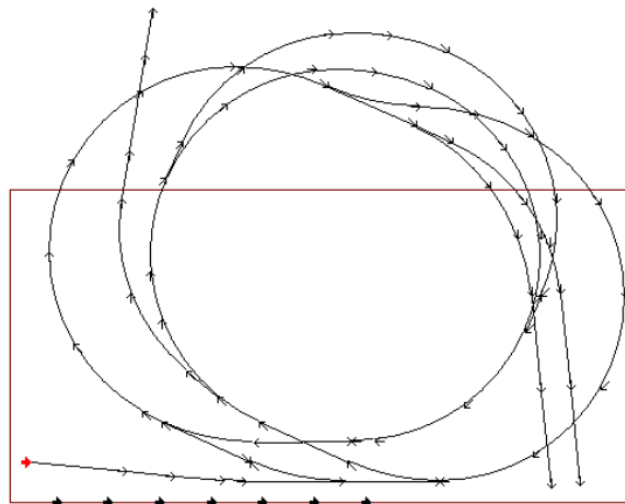


## Andrew's Musings Part 2

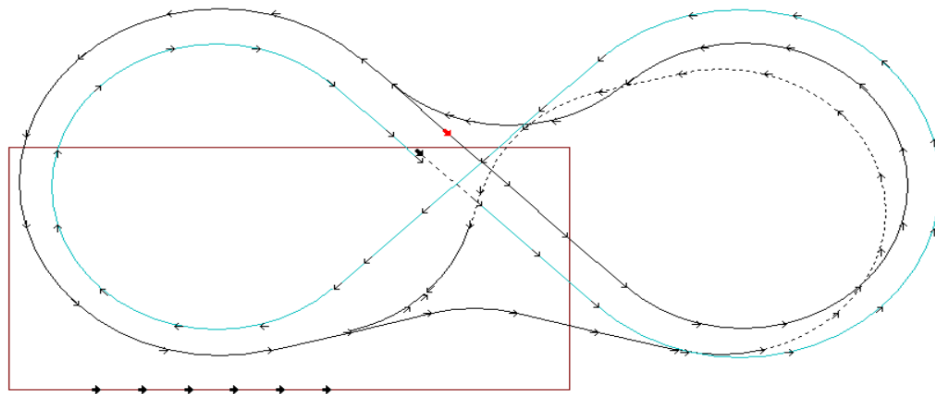
Here goes – article number two about my crazy module building. It all started with the viaduct . . . actually it started before then, which the accumulation of ideas which lead to the design of the super module, as they are called, when they span 2 or more module lengths for the one “scene”. The background to this is probably worth another article, but I will briefly outline it here. I first got introduced to Marklin trains as a 5 year old when my Dad bought the family a 1 gauge starter set (which is still doing its paces over 40 years later at exhibitions). Naturally one gets busy with other activities, but in the year 2000 when I had the privilege of visiting Europe and travelling on the ICE train, I got on board again with the purchase of an ICE starter set (the starter set name is SOOOO appropriate, since it is the start of more to come). Anyway, back in NZ, I bumped into Rex Meijering at a swapmeet, was introduced to the Auckland Marklin Club and was very much taken by Peter Clapcott's computer control system. By the end of 2001 (only remember this date because Robyn was ready to burst with our first son, Benjamin), I had teamed up with Western Districts Model Railway Club and had an exhibition going in our church hall. My contribution to this was a 1.2m x 0.94m layout running 5 HO trains on two lines fully automated, reversing, shunting etc. (TrainCAD picture below).



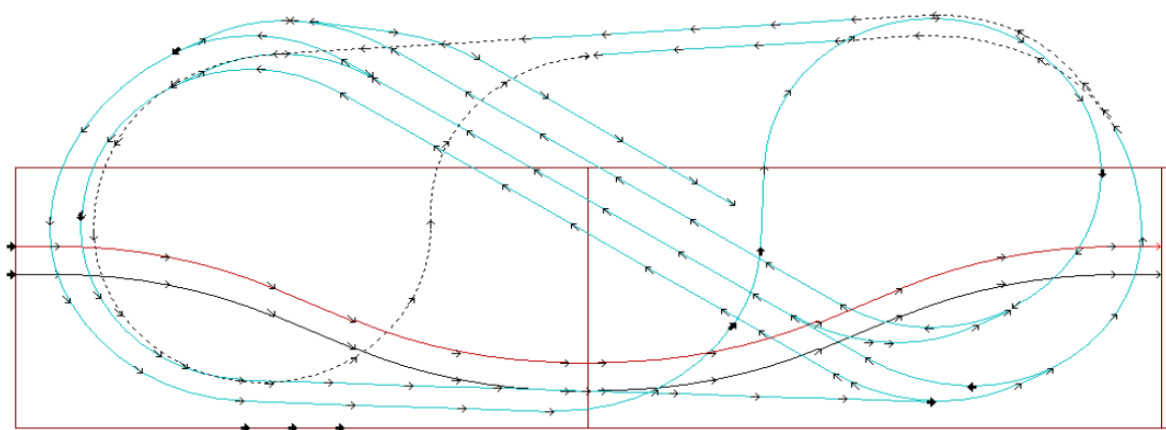
This layout came from a combination of Peter's software and ideas from a couple of Christmas tree layouts that did some pretty cool combos in terms of track design (if I may say so myself). If it looks a bit confused, it's because it is on “split levels”, the “circle” track being underneath, the “peanut” shaped track over the top, joining together at the front where the double slip is. Yes the gradients were at the limits! While we are here, have a look at the combination of the double slip with two normal points – it's one of my trade secrets – allowing two lines for two trains, or an inverted figure 8 if running one train. Add in some sidings and automation and there were 5 trains mixing it up on this layout, if you can call, for example, a class 89 with a couple of wagons a full length train . . .

So what has this got to do with the viaduct? Well, getting together with Western Districts meant we were invited to be at Model X. A few years of showing private layouts lead to the formation of the moduleers to build something new, but it also brought in interest from a barber shop which wanted to have a train layout in the front window to attract interest. Hmmmm, two lines so two trains can be running . . . over and under = figure 8 . . . how does the other line fit in? What I ended up designing for him was the following, with the blue figure 8 starting at mid-level and going up and the

double teardrop (as I call it) starting at mid-level and going down – 3 levels in total. By the way – ignore the red rectangle box – it is marking out a standard module size of 1220 x 610.



So the modular group has just got started. What are we each going to do? Well I'm thinking I actually like what I did for the Barber Shop and I like automation, but it's not going to fit with two mainlines coming through. How to get the mainlines through . . . how about having them go over a big valley, with a separate layout down below, which gives me and the boys something to play with when at home? Hence the viaduct, which fits with my love of bridges, tunnels and mountains (which you will see in a lot of my modules to come). So after several iterations, the final layout diagram is as follows, with the mainline soaring up above on level 5 (the red and black lines), and the separate layout on levels 1, 2 and 3 shown in blue below (total height 500mm). In the middle you can see four blue lines (on level 2) angling to the left (one siding and 3 through lines). The valley station is on this level, next to the first of the 3 lines, which is on one side of a teardrop. This goes off to the right, drops down to level 1 to the other teardrop (shown with dotted lines) then back up again along the back of the module back to the station. Another platform sits between lines 2 and 3, line 3 being part of the figure 8 which goes up to level 3 and back down again. Line 2 can go in either direction, giving plenty of opportunity for automation. The actual layout as built has two sidings on it, so there is a bit more of a freight yard presence in the scene, with train detection built into the rails so I can do some shunting.



Level 3, line 3, 3 lines, agrhh, confused? Hey, leave the logistics over to me – what's more important is what the audience get to see and making it a bit more interesting than "it goes in there and comes out there". And of course the scenery. Unfortunately, being the first layout off the rank, doesn't mean it's the most completed, in fact quite the opposite with great plans thwarted by the pressure

for building more modules to fill in gaps at exhibitions, as a result of mad presidents who like the idea of bigger is better :o). The eventual plan is to have a grand chateau on one side of the valley and light up the little village below. Automation of the trains will become a feature, but also include a control board out front so the kids can run the trains themselves (well at least start and stop them) and press a few other buttons to see things happen, hear the church bells etc., etc.. So yes Tom, it is a long way from being finished.

One of my biggest issues is the main feature – the viaduct. Forgive the fact that engineering wise it probably wouldn't stand up, but I haven't been fully satisfied with the look of it in terms of the stonework. It looks tacky and amateurish. I'm sure Steve S would say it needs some painstaking time spent on individual bricks, knowing the great work he has been doing (and redoing) on his own viaduct corner module. There is one "innovation" I should mention – papier mache. I've tried a range of techniques on this module. Polystyrene is great for lightness and cutting landscapes out. Just don't eat the stuff – boy those beady bits go everywhere. Through the back tunnels I used the traditional frame and chicken wire technique. Plaster over the lot. Couple of exhibitions and the layout is looking shabby with bits of plaster knocked off it (is better if the plaster isn't pure white, but has been darkened first). So I decided to try out papier mache as suggested to me at a national conference clinic. Papier mache is great! It is durable, light, can be drilled into like wood without things crumbling, is messy but not as flowable as plaster, makes for really natural looking rock faces. There is only one problem – don't build your module a few days before an exhibition (which I tried doing right before Model X one year). It takes WEEKS to dry. At least it gives you some extra time to mould the landscape into shape unlike GIB 45.

So there we have it. In some ways, there is not a lot more to add about the viaduct modules, except for throwing in a few pictures to say a thousand words. Yes it is a work in progress. Yes, there is still a lot to be done. Good thing I have old age to look forward to!



