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A Modular Standard for Gauge '3'

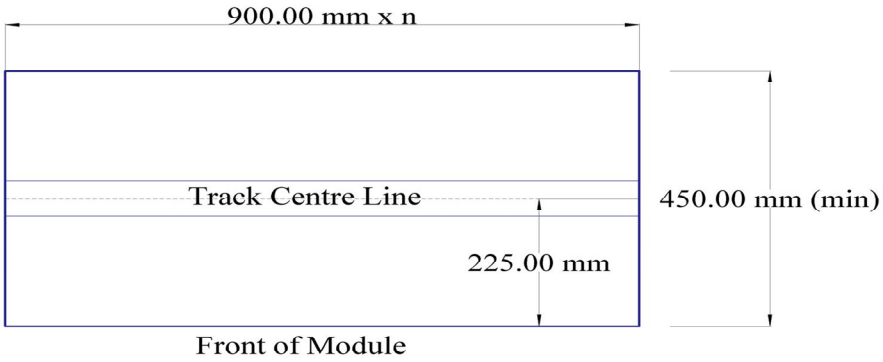
By Ian Turner

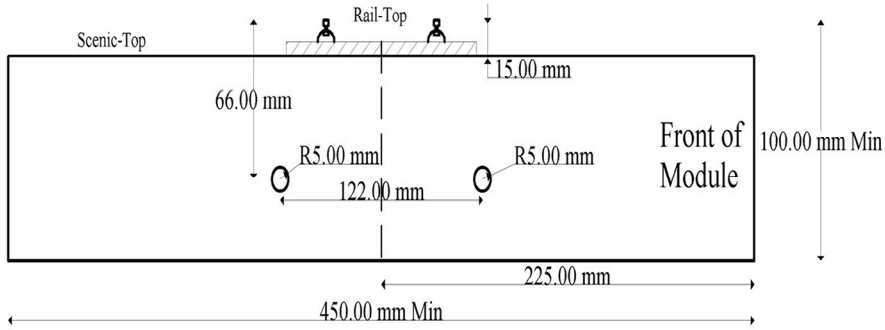
The Spur II Group's 2010 National Meeting at Schenklengsfeld.

For some time now, I have been working with the idea of a "Standard" for both a 'connector' and an associated modular approach to baseboard construction in G3. Members may recall my "Connect 3" design (last mentioned in the March 2009 Newsletter) and perhaps noticed my modular track lengths at the AGM. The Mk1 'C3' connector was a laser-cut plate that was screwed to the end of modules and was aligned via a 'Jig'. We had some prototypes laser cut and they were distributed for trial. Some comments were returned but to achieve an economical unit, we would have needed a fairly large (and expensive) stocking order. It was probably also over engineered (a weakness of mine). Something simpler was called for.

A recent post on the G3 Forum attracted my attention. It was a link to the Spur II website in Germany. Spur II is the German equivalent to Gauge 3, and although they also model narrow gauge as well as standard gauge prototypes, they are all to the same scale. I found myself looking at their 'gallery' and photographs of their Schenklengsfeld 2009 "Get Together". Here was "Modular" on a grand scale! I had originally been inspired by 'NTrak' (and the oNeTrak sub-set of this) but I had also looked at work in other popular scales at that time. This time I looked much more closely at the work of the Spur II Group, it being the equivalent in scale and gauge to G3.

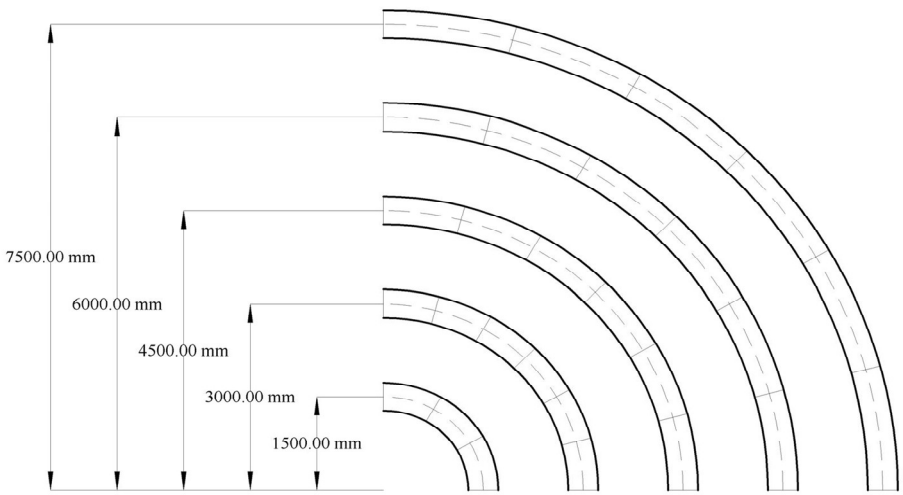
The main difference is of course the European (rather than British) loading gauge. I decided to use the Spur II (and NEM) standards and start over. It seems to me to make good sense to use of what is clearly a good deal of existing practical experience in large-scale modular railways. I have not just copied the Spur II Standard (there are differences, as there will always be compromises





to be made) but they are compatible. I also made contact with the Spur II Group to check my understanding of their Standard. Ian Harper was able to introduce me (via email) with Torsten Schoening of Spur II.

My original modular concept was based on a 36” x 18” grid but Ralph Brades suggested we should go metric with a 900mm x 300mm grid. After a lot of thought and a fair bit of lobbying, I’ve set the basic module size at 900mm x 450mm min. Spur II use a minimum 500mm width but they do not specify length (something I’ve also checked with Torsten). I originally thought of using 1000mm x 500mm but as the existing G3 rail is supplied in 36” lengths, this was inconvenient. Using 900mm results in very little rail ‘waste’ and most rail will be used on custom and curved modules where the rail length is not such a factor. The mechanical & electrical connections specified by Spur II have been adhered to, and in theory, we should be able to connect together should we ever wish to.



In terms of ‘standard radii’ Spur II do not seem to recommend those either but I feel it is better to suggest some, rather than just have everyone use an arbitrary radius. I initially worked to a standard 900x450 grid to work out how to place the track centre of curved sections in the correct place (to line up with straight modules on the same grid). This gave some strange (irregular) radii to work with. I therefore decided that my recommendation should be to work in 1500mm steps from 1500mm to 7500mm, with ‘sections’ at 15 degree radials. This does of course ignore the 900x450 grid in the curved sections, but I don’t think there should be any issues in practice. Cliff Barker also has turnouts in 4500mm & 6000mm radii. In other words the “pro’s” outweigh the “con’s”.

There were a few other issues but I will not detail them here. Suffice it to say that I believe most dimensions could be selected on an arbitrary basis but that it makes sense for everyone to work to the same ones where possible. Where it isn't, I've introduced the concept of a 'custom' module (which should cover just about anything people want to do).

At the last Committee Meeting in April, I presented the "M01 G3 Module Standard" to the Committee and proposed we circulate it to a small group of experienced G3 Exhibitors/Members for commentary and review. I have also been previously asked by other Members for early access which I was pleased to do.

I should finally state that no-one authorised me to undertake this work. It is entirely my own initiative and I have borrowed heavily from others (and most particularly from Spur II). I have no authority to dictate module standards. However, I do intend to build modules for my own use, as do others I have spoken to. It seems to me to be advantageous if we can work to some common dimensions and thereby improve the versatility of what we are building. My requirement is primarily for a portable test track that I can store away and eventually take with me when we move. Others will be more focused on a scenic approach and I hope that I have considered their requirement in composing this recommendation.

The M01 Modular Standards PDF document is available for download from the website by Members for their consideration. If any Member would like a printed copy of the M01 Standard, please send me a stamped, self addressed envelope.

My thanks to Spur II Members, Torsten Schoening for his assistance and to Rudi Theuerkauf for his photographs of the Schenklengsfeld 2010 Event

More views of the Spur II Group's 2010 National Meeting at Schenklengsfeld.
Regional Groups meet throughout the year at smaller local venues.
Photographs by Spur II Member Rudi Theuerkauf (courtesy of Torsten Schoening)