



FEBRUARY 2006

Next Meetings

22nd January 2006: Post-Christmas Gathering,
Information Centre and Cafe Picnic Area,
Fisherman's Island

11th February: Garth Frazer, Buderim

1st April: Denis Lane, Springwood

17/18th June: Toowoomba Train Show

8th July: Ken Leitch, Landsborough

9th September: Graeme Emery & Avon Aitchison,
Macleay Island

4th November: Mark Ward, Toowoomba

(All meetings start at 1.30pm unless advised)

Naming Rights

Many newsletters have appropriate names and I am wondering should we find a name for our small issue. Of course it isn't going to be easy finding such a name that hasn't already been used. Personally, I don't mind one way or the other. However send along your ideas and we could put it to one of our meetings held in conjunction with outings. We do things cautiously up here in Division 1 but let's see if we can settle this before May.

Display Layout Progress

Work on the display layout has recommenced for 2006. Bob Brown's patience is being tested again and all modules have been left erect for some months. We now have all of the track laid, all of the drop feeders, connectors and buses installed. The two main bridges have been built and work on the river is progressing so that these can be fitted. The grain elevator is being finished and scenery profiles are about to be laid. No doubt there will be a test run as soon as possible and that is sure to fire up the enthusiasm. It is genuinely expected that our first showing will be at the Toowoomba Train Show in June.

Queries

There must be many ways we can help each other as Division 1 NMRA members. Some of us do have the chance to get together about every 2 months but that time is often taken up with important matters and queries from individual members can be easily overlooked. There is a lot of information held by our members and a lot of it would be helpful to other modellers. Some have been involved with MR for over 40 years. Others have huge holdings of various magazines and books. Still others

may have visited the US and carry a lot of knowledge in their heads. I know several of our members belong to one or more of the historical and technical societies based on an American railroad and so have access to their journals. What is one member's junk pile might be just what someone else is looking for. So I think we should start a "query" or "seeking" section in our newsletter. So please send along your "Queries" and I will publish them in the hope that one of us can solve your problem.

The Power of Pictures

We see dozens of photographs and painting of railroads. Out of this plethora of information some stand out as inspirational. This is a very personal thing but subjects in some photographs just call out to be modelled. One of these photos is on page 42 of Beebe & Clegg's "Mixed Train Daily". This is of an engine house clad in corrugated iron with quite a lot of the front cladding falling off. This type of engine house must have been reasonably common. Another similar engine house appears on page 56 of the same book.

In Steve King's "Clinchfield Country" on page 24 is a photo of a small coal tippie that looks so fragile a working exhaust could easily blow it over. Yet this tippie's footprint is very small and most suitable for a layout industry.

In Trains Feb. '59 is a photo of the Sumpter & Choctaw in Georgia. A small 2-8-2 idly steams away while a flat car with a railed steam crane helped by a muscular worker using a crowbar load logs on to other flatcars. That situation screams out to be modelled.

In another Trains magazine is a photo of the crew of a SW-1 diesel using the loco's walkways as a platform from which to pinch apples overhanging the track. Is such a scene possible on your layout?

These little vignettes personalise your railroad and give it authenticity.

How many models do you see of a small town that has just experienced a shower of rain with wet shiny roads and roofs rather than the flat painted ones. Almost all of the towns we see on model railroads are built on flat ground. Few are built on sloping ground. I have never seen a model where the viewer looks down a slope into the right-of-way yet this is a common situation. This requires the layout edge to be higher than the first track in from the edge. It could be done so that the viewer is in a sloping backyard with a board fence and the railroad on the other side of the fence, lower still than the fence base.

I've seen curved rivers coming across the railroad where the higher, steep banks are on the inside of the curve; exactly opposite of the situation in nature.

A lot of compromises have to be made for all sorts of reasons on a layout. But we should endeavour to get things the way they are in nature. And we should use all sorts of vignettes in our scenery to give scenes interest throughout our layouts.

Another one that comes to mind; how often do you see silver-grey boards on un-painted buildings depicting old timber? I once did some experiments trying to emulate the silver-grey we so often see on wood. I tried painting Northeastern lumber grey and then wiping silver paint over the grey using an old cloth. It turned out fairly authentic. I tried other methods using greys, silver, indian ink, etc. and although results were slightly different with each method used, they all looked real! Give one a try and build something from your results, even if it is just an old dunny.

One for the creative modeller or the closet architect would be to build an Art Deco cinema across the road from your station. If it is a small town your theatre could still be Art Deco in style but only just. That is, it could be “cheap” Art Deco. You wouldn’t expect to see a classy expensive theatre in a small town of only a few hundred people. Still a proprietor might like to try and get the public in with a touch, and only a just a slight touch, of style.

We see only a few sorts of trees on models. I have an urge to make a few weeping willows for our display layout. I’ve got few ideas yet of how I’m going to do this but I would like to see a willow or three on our river bank with their hanging foliage in the water and being dragged slightly downstream by the flow. Why? Because it is so common and yet no one even seems to model it.

I saw a layout in Sydney a couple of months ago that had a pond where cattle came to drink and in the edge of that pond the soil was shiny and wet and peppered with hoof prints holding shiny water. Looking at such a scene you have to convince yourself that you are looking at a model rather than real life. But that railroad was one where there were many such scenes and populated with people in the right fashion for the times. No car was a later model than necessary and certainly all of the rolling stock was “in time”.

How do these guys do it? Firstly they keep their eyes open. They see what happens in nature and real life. Then they work out how to model that. Sometimes it can be a complicated job but each complicated job is the sum total of lots of simple jobs.

Another thing is to remember the era we are modelling. You remember back to a time when people did more things for themselves if you are modelling the 40’s and 50’s. “Practical Mechanics” magazine was full of do-it-yourself projects. That slowly lost appeal as people spent more time in front of television while cheap imports and improved wages made it unnecessary. So modelling that era might require you to put a backyard shed in a scene with a few half finished projects leaning against the walls. In the 60’s the shed could now be a bit run down and a car being hotted-up or if in the 70’s a local rock band practising in it. Please don’t have the sound on though!

A final scenic flaw that is so common. Usually you see model buildings sitting on the land as though they were just dropped in by helicopter. Yet just about every

building I’ve ever seen has a splash band around it from the ground tapering in colour strength to about a foot or two from the ground. This band is a splash of the colour of the local soil.

Here’s Another Ten Questions for You

1. What railroad featured a beaver in its logo?
2. What is the designated weight of a class “A” Shay locomotive?
3. What railroad used a herald containing a monad?
4. The Uintah Railway Co. ran only in Utah. What product was this railroad built to carry? There’s a clue in the name!
5. What railroad used to run to Key West, an island well off southern Florida?
6. What railroad used a simple “M” as its reporting mark?
7. How many states of the U.S. did the Great Northern service?
8. Why were Russian decapods called “Russian”?
9. What designation is given to a 6-wheel truck on an electric or diesel-electric locomotive with all 3 axles driving?
10. What railroad ran its overnight boxcars designated “Sentinel”?

Answers to Last Issue’s Quick Quiz

1. Wellsville Addison & Galeton.
2. Great Northern.
3. Tavern car. A car fitted with a bar and tables and seats.
4. Hold lamp out at horizontal arm’s length from the shoulder when train is running.
5. The Seaboard Air Line.
6. American Refrigerator Transit Company.
7. 1943.
8. Missouri Pacific.
9. Lima.
10. Mexico.

That’s all for this month. The next Newsletter is due out about the end of March/early April.