



July 2006

Next Meetings

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)

14/15 October: National Convention, Niagara Park (Gosford Area), NSW

Display Layout Initiation At Toowoomba

After such a slow gestation our NMRA Division 1 display layout made it to Toowoomba for its first outing. Unfortunately it wasn't finished, but our Toowoomba friends assured us

that this wasn't a problem as people like to see what is "underneath" a layout so that an idea of how to go about constructing one for themselves can be gained.

There were a few teething problems which will send us back to the drawing boards but it was ready for the 9am opening – only just. Once all yard tracks were working and some locos programmed to DCC it ran fairly smoothly if we were cautious over one or two spots. In fact we often had five trains running at a time and most of the weekend we had four trains on the move at once. The potential of the layout was being realised and after an increase in morale and in our camaraderie due to this outing many of us are keen to work further to present it as a finished railroad. The weekend at this Toowoomba railroad show was wonderfully organised and we thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality of our hosts, the Darling Downs MR Club.

Traditionally, the NMRA present a trophy for the best layout at the show and this was won by the Ryans Gully and Mount Mee Tramway. This is an On30 system with the hard work done by Geoff McMahon, John Cooper and Stephen Colclough.

One of the highlights of the Toowoomba show is the social aspect and as usual this was well catered for. A dinner was held on the Saturday night with about 200 guests including local politicians and dignitaries.



A scene on the Ryans Gully with a Climax locomotive doing the haulings.



A happy group of NMRA members enjoying the dinner at Toowoomba. Sadly it was too cold for anyone to show off their new NMRA shirts.

Visit to Gold Coast Group

On Saturday 6th May we availed ourselves of a special invitation to visit the Gold Coast Model Railway Workshop group. They have managed to secure the 1st floor of an spacious industrial warehouse of 250 sq.metres (2,500sq.ft). Not only that but they have got it rent free due to the magnificent generosity of the owners of the property, Gold Coast Earthmoving. To add to the attraction, there is a hobby shop right next door!

So far the Group have been there for 3 years and have layouts in G, O, On30, HO/OO and N scale. They have about 160 members and very importantly a junior group. They conduct classes in various aspects of model railroading and this must be wonderful for members and non-members, particularly the junior group. With such a large area the Group has built rather large layouts and due to the costs of those things which must be bought, they have become adept in finding and scrounging cast-off materials and turning these into very accurate scenic elements. Of note are the "soft rocks" made of sponge rubber from car seats, mattresses, chairs, etc. Amazingly, earthen banks are modelled from paperbark (melaleuca) with the inside outwards and this gives the right texture and colour that would be just about impossible any other way.



A scene from the On30 layout using the inside of Melaleuca bark (paperbark) to gain the subtle interplay of colours and textures representing an earthen bank above and below the track.

Tree ferns are modelled so realistically with feathers as fronds and tea-leaves as bark! Scenic dividers are arranged so that each scene on the HO layout represents a particular geographic area. This way you find NSW, Queensland, American and British scenes to satisfy most modellers but these scenes don't detract from each other. We, the NMRA members, look forward to our next visit. Isn't it admirable to see Gold Coast Earthmoving's generosity helping modellers and at the same time giving young people the opportunity to develop skills and interests as well as giving someone the chance to recycle old junk?

Here's Another Ten Questions for You

1. What state in the US has the greatest railroad mileage?
2. What is a shoo-fly track?
3. What is the longest stretch of straight track in the US?
4. What is a slide detector fence?
5. What is the longest railroad bridge in the US?
6. What is the longest tunnel in the US?
7. Who invented the first steam locomotive?
8. What was the first locomotive to pull rolling stock at over 100mph?
9. What was known as the "Jawn Henry" locomotive?
10. When were the first dome cars placed in passenger service?

Answers to Last Issues Quick Quiz

1. Passenger coaches with usually a baggage section in the middle to segregate negroes from whites on some southern railroads.
2. Fettlers.
3. The Broadway Limited.
4. The Delaware Lackawanna & Western.
5. Engineer.

6. Roanoke.
7. Minden and Reno.
8. 1830.
9. 1856 from Sacramento to Folsom – 22miles; later part of the SP.
10. Supplied buffalo meat (hence the nickname) to construction forces engaged in building the Kansas Pacific (now part of the UP).

Signals

It's surprising how many model railroads don't have signals. Sure they are just another electrical gadget that can go wrong. But per dollar and per unit of trouble they must be just about the best investment for animated action you could have on a layout. Besides, they are usually mainly vertical and act as an aesthetic foil for the mainly horizontal track. Supplementing this is that they are often silver or white and as a bright object once again are counterpoint to the dark brown or dull black roadbed. These days with LED's, the likelihood of having to change blown bulbs has been almost eliminated. The 3mm LED's can be filed down to a remarkably small diameter lamp pretty easily.

But very small LED's can be bought from speciality electronic shops. Wiring is uncomplicated and control circuits and methods aren't insurmountable. Most of the few that I've seen, use the LED colour just as it comes. To enrich the fidelity most need a resistance in series. This makes the LED shine less brightly and more the colour of the real ones. A big improvement can be obtained by painting the light emitting lens with a translucent glass paint. Vitrial brand (\$6.95 per bottle) and others make ideal transparent colours and can be bought from art shops. One bottle of each colour would do just about the whole AR region! Sometimes you will need to paint a couple of coatings on your LED, especially on the green lamp. I've also found that blue is sometimes a better colour to use than green on the green light. You can fit three fine enamel insulated wires up a 1/16" tube without any trouble and the common can be soldered to the mast itself.

Semaphores require a bit more work but often only one lamp. Use a yellow LED for this and solder one leg to the mast to conduct current. Then put a touch of epoxy where you are going to have your platform or ladder join the mast. When that dries, glue the platform or ladder there and as the ladder is insulated from the mast, it can then act as the other conductor for the lamp. The hole up the tube can now be used to run a thin piece of piano wire up to a small slot that you have cut in the top of the mast. You now have the gear to operate the semaphore blade. Of course you can buy the complete signals but as they are easy to

make this might be a good scratchbuilding project for the adventurous.

Below the roadbed is more difficult. Past issues of magazines have shown hot nichrome wire, three solenoids and DC points motors as actuating mechanisms. Other methods have also been published with the actuating linkage coming from relay armatures and from key levers. I feel this is where we could do a lot better.

Surely we as a group could come up with a really effective mechanism for semaphore operation. Good signalling becomes imperative now with more layouts going to DCC. We have to read them and the other signs along the right-of-way to operate safely. Probably, we spend most of our time when operating a layout, concentrating our gaze on the super detailed loco with bells, lights, whistles, etc. Why not bring the other features and elements of the layout up to the same standard?

National Convention, 14/15 October, Niagara Park

This year the NMRA National Convention is being held in the Gosford area. That means that it is on the Queensland side of Sydney by quite a few kilometres or over an hours driving time. It also means that this could be one where many of us go and join up with our southern members. By rail or by road it's "closer".

Many aspects of modelling are being covered and for those considering or already working with DCC, there are several clinics and workshops on this subject. You will have the chance to see how others do it and in particular how others who have been into DCC from very early days have mastered its ways.

Gosford is a particularly attractive area so there are plenty of features that partners may wish to see or be involved in. An interesting agenda of these has been planned by the organising committee. For us modellers, the layout tours should be a treat. Gosford is now the home of several of this nations best model railroads.

As usual, some of the traders will be present and it's a chance to pick up those items you have been searching for. Also it is a pleasant train ride to the centre of Sydney or its suburbs if there is a shop or two down there you must visit. This means that you may have to book into your motel or whatever for an extra day for such a visit but it may be well worth it.

Subjects for clinics and workshops include besides DCC, Scenery, Operation, Airbrushing, Signalling, Scratchbuilding, etc. Note Operation. The Gosford area is home to a round-robin group who accurately run trains as an operating business.

So check your diary and think about reserving that weekend or a few days more for a trip to Gosford for the NMRA National Convention. A good place to show off your NMRA shirt and name badge!

Division 1 Module Group (by Glenn Stevens)

Considering we had not run trains on our display modular layout, our first showing at Toowoomba was a roaring success. Many thanks are due to the members who financed the layout, to Paul Skehan, Roy Berryman, Graham Emery and Ian Venables along with yours truly who provided transport and muscle in setting up and tearing down after the show. Ken Leitch provided electrical and mechanical skills to get more than one train running by Saturday morning.

Ken also provided programming and maintenance assistance over the weekend sometimes to the detriment of the operation of his own Shasta Pacific N scale layout. Also to Grahame Davis, Denis Lane and Mike Dutton who came along on Saturday to help. Last but definitely not least to Bob Brown, for without the use of his carport over the last two years, we would still be holding meetings wondering how we were going to do it.

The layout still has its problems that in all probability would not have come to light without a full blown weekend of running. However we received a few positive comments about our scenery concept. The design of our modules proved worthwhile as the time taken to dismantle and pack up and be on the road was 1 _ hours.

Two important things must now occur. Although Bob has been so generous, we do need to keep looking for a more permanent storage area. Secondly, we need a new SIG co-ordinator. Because of work and study commitments, for the next 6 months I no longer have the time to devote in monitoring and organising the SIG as well as be Div 1 Superintendent. Please think seriously about these issues to facilitate resolving them quickly. These subjects and other important issues about the display layout will be discussed at the meeting next Saturday (8th July) at Ken Leitch's.

[Note: photos of the layout have been posted on the Division's web site. Follow the links to/from the SIG page.]