



May 2007

Next Meetings

12th May at Bob Brown, Bray Park.

Jun 16/17 – Toowoomba Train Show,
Toowoomba Show Grounds

Aug 11 – Ken Leitch, Beerwah

13th October Ian Wellings, Currimundi

8th December Mark Ward, Towoomba

(All meetings start at 1.30pm unless advised)

Gathering at Alan Harland's

On Saturday 31st March we had a pleasant outing at Allan Harland's in Oxenford. Allan gave a talk on the differences and the problems of using sound between DCC methods that employed by DC powered locos. This brought about a lot of discussion and it is hoped that ideas highlighted will help our members get the best out of their RR's no matter what method they choose to use.

Allan had obviously researched his subject well and he had considered those who for whatever reason, were reluctant to take on DCC. The great thing was that he was able to demonstrate on the layout the effectiveness of the sound system he has. One of the advantages of NMRA membership is that we have the opportunity to visit other peoples work and learn about subjects we ourselves haven't considered.

I've been to Allan's a few times and have always come away with some good ideas. His layout is beautifully scened and the controls are manicured nicely into his fascia.

Glenn announced that Lynn Zelmer had sent him some books the details of which he will e-mail all members. Lynn has generously given the books to Div 1 and all funds raised from the sale, will go into our kitty. Thank you Lynn!

Glenn next spoke of the progress in organising the 2008 convention. Towards this aim, we will be running a raffle of a car GPS system to raise funds for the preliminaries. You will hear more about this as we progress with convention planning.

Show-and-tell had 5 items of interest. Firstly, Ken Leach showed his new NCE Intermediate

radio-cab without a display window. Ken also mentioned that it can be hooked up to a cable connection.

Denis Lane showed progress on a wonderful scratchbuilt sawmill. The plans of this sawmill are in the MR November 1961. Denis had overcome some difficulties in the structure by clever ideas. He has used dress sequins for circular saws. His flooring had a full set of studs and joists. His plan is to roof it but leave the sides open to better show off the internal workings. While not yet finished this is going to be a real show-piece and I hope he enters it in a contest somewhere. Or better, I hope he is planning to enter it in our convention model building contest.

Phil Perry had his new Athearn sound/DCC N scale Challenger to show off and what a beautiful piece it is too. It is amazing the detail and accuracy that is coming to these small scales.

Bob Cuffe showed a Balboa GN coach of which he has 9 and is trying to dispose of them. All have lighting and are in brand new condition never having run! Here's a chance to pick up some in-expensive brass.

Glenn Stevens then showed a complete KCS passenger train with its colourful loco and black coaches. It was made up of 2 F-3's and 4 Genesis coaches. He also had a four piece "Coaster" to show us a very modern passenger set.



Allan Harland operating on his Great Northern which he maintains in excellent condition. The layout also features locomotives of the SP&S.

During the ensuing discussion, Glenn also warned modellers to take care if replacing Walthers coach couplers with Kadee. The uncoupling pin extension at the top of the coupler can foul the diaphragms and cause derauling. The cure is simple, carefully grind off the offending piece or drop the couplers with a shim being mindful to maintain NMRA standards with regard to coupler height.

He also mentioned that he had problems with the three piece truck. He found that in assembly it had not been assembled squarely. This could be rectified by loosening the parts and tightening screws after the three parts had been squared.

Display Layout

Quite a bit of work has been accomplished now and a lot of care is being taken with this. The track should be smoother and sudden changes in tangents both horizontal and vertical have been eliminated. Hopefully this will make it better to show off our 6-wheel truck diesels and we can expect passenger trains to play a big part in the display following "E" units.

We glued 6mm ply over the masonite fascia on the front of the layout as this is stronger and can be better used for signage, etc. It is a bit heavier but we believe that it is strong enough to withstand future moving around. It has been painted in a colour which should enhance the scenic aspects of the landscape.

We have now completed a hidden scenery "facia" on the rear of each module and this will terminate the scenery forms and leave about 20mm of space between the scenery and the backdrop. This will protect the scenery and make it easier for the backdrop to appear part of the far distance.

This time we are definitely using the tube and pin alignment of rails between each module as well as our datum pins and the excellent spring locks we have built into each module end.

Graeme Davis's beautiful road bridge is set up and our trains are going to be enhanced by appearing from under it. The other two bridges at the front of the layout have been reversed so that the larger one is to the rear away from viewers. Our next showing will be at Toowoomba on the weekend of 16/17th June and we are hoping to have a lot of the scenery in by then.

Comment

If there is one thing I am guilty of and really feel it strongly, it is in not having a layout. When I first became interested in MR there was very little available ready-made US models in Australia and what was, was sometimes difficult to source. That steered me in the direction of scratchbuilding.

If you looked at the catalogues of the major retailers back then, there was no doubt that they expected everyone to be scratchbuilding. They all carried the full complement of Romford drivers

and gears. Brass rods, sheet and wire featured boldly. Glues, scribed wood, rivet-marked metal strips, Northeastern timber, Red Ball dreadnaught ends, Kemtron products, etc. were well represented.

Then to get it here from America often took 3 months and you had to hope that Customs didn't slug you. I once had the messianic notion that I was going to scratchbuild everything on my layout and of course it was going to be huge. I had a mate who was going to do the same thing and we used to meet once a week and discuss our mutual ideas until the wee hours.

We both enjoyed using our hands and overcoming difficulties and interpreting plans and unclear photos. I still do! We both knew at the time that we usually built things better than any kit of the manufactured model item that we saw.

The trouble is that manufacturing technology overtook us eventually. Almost everyone I knew in this hobby was an ardent scratchbuilder. I will always scratchbuild models because I just love it and to me it is still a major part of MR. Besides there are still a lot of things I want that aren't commercially available.

But no longer will I be silly enough to think of scratchbuilding everything!

In time I "mellowed" with much of this scratchbuilding idea and started to include "heavy" kit-bashing. You know the system, when there is hardly much of the original left and you begin to wonder why you didn't scratchbuild the whole thing! At least you can get your models to really look like the originals by these methods. More importantly you can get models that are unique.

Later I "progressed" to accepting a model straight out of the box and only doing the minimum of kit-bashing. This sometimes means installing a couple of brackets under the brake levers so that the freight car does have some form underneath where it may be seen crossing a bridge. I find it impossible to accept cast-on ladders on hoppers so they come off and wire ones replace them.

I know a lot of modellers who buy the best you can get in plastic these days. They can quote all of the attributes of the model; its motor type, coupler requirements, what sort of decoder it needs and the sound bits available for it or that is has installed and the power requirements of each.

Yet they can put it on their track lacking the right number of air-horns, or with the air-tanks on the wrong side, or with an “any-size and shape will do” injector, etc. What comes out of the box is what goes onto the track and is never improved.

These modellers often know little about the history or the workings of the prototype for that piece. I could understand this if it was extremely difficult to correct these problems; but often all it takes is an hour or less of time and a bit of ingenuity to make a vast improvement.

Often to scratchbuild a part accurately, one has to know how the thing works. Of course that’s not necessary to enjoy this hobby but I’m sure that doing something correctly, adding it to your model, completing the model to the very best of your ability and knowledge gives and added bonus of increased pleasure when you see your much improved model rolling down the track.

Otherwise you have a model just like any other and not unique to your chosen line.

Then you tell me that you are operating your layout just like the real thing. But let’s face it; only that you pick-up and drop off rolling stock and make passes, etc.; perhaps running through nice scenery, assuming that it is naturally logical.

Does it pass kit made structures just like many others have on their layouts? Or have you kit-bashed these structures to fit the locale and the industry portrayed?

Are all your towns on flat ground and all of the streets parallel to the track and with right angle corners?

Once the pendulum was perhaps too far to one side of reasonably accurate models running around in circles without much operation.

I think that the bias might have gone a tad too far the other way now with less accurate models, considering that all of the bits are out there and that castings are so good these days, running in very realistic operation patterns.

With technology and with better dies we can get our models pretty good straight out of the box but often there is still some way to go. Let’s go that short way and enjoy the journey by your adding to the accuracy of your models with just a little bit more effort. I can assure you that this isn’t a call to enrol in the Nit-pickers Society but rather a call to you to give yourself the added pleasure of easy detailing.

Web-sites

When I started using the web for modelling there was very little on it. Now the amount of information for we modellers is overwhelming. If you want photographs of almost anything in the RR world it can be found on the web. Some of us often swap web-sites with each other to help on various projects and yet still I find MR surfers who are unaware of some of the most useful sites available.

How about you send me a list of your favourite railroad and model railroad websites and I’ll publish them for everyone’s benefit.

We may not be able to get them all in one issue but that’s okay; we’ll just serialise it. We need something now that our quiz has finished. And please also include those non-railroad websites that may be useful like a site that has photos of oil company logos or Coca-Cola adverts or holiday billboards, etc. used through the years.

2008 Convention

As you all know, Division 1 is hosting our Australasian Region national convention next year. The Convention Committee has held a few meetings planning this and if you feel that you would like to give a talk or workshop now is the time to let the committee know. Also if you wish to submit your layout for a layout tour on the Sunday please let the committee know quickly.

Speed Record

As I write this (3-4-07), I notice that the French Alstom Technologies double-decker train has just broken the speed record for trains by doing 574.8kph (357.2mph). This speed was sustained for a little over 15 minutes. The only American on board hoped that a planned Californian 700 mile system with 200 mph trains would go ahead and pave the way for an alternate to road and air travel in a world of depleting oil supplies.

Remembering the theme song of QR years ago, “I’ll Walk Beside You”, one wonders how long it will be before we do something about the present rail speeds in Australia which are ridiculously slow.

A few years ago I rode the “slow” train from Paris to Carcassonne and from the digital indicator in the coach we were doing 231kph (143mph) and we thought that was fast until the TGV on its way to Toulouse flashed by.

Another Appeal

Please let Glenn know if you change your address or e-mail address. Alright, I've been harping on this for some time. But the time taken to send out the Newsletter can be increased by up to a whole day just sorting out e-mail bounces. There is nothing nicer nor more rewarding to the Newsletter Editor than to see the mail-out go smoothly without a single stuff-up though rarely does that happen. Besides, it takes time away from projects; where it is badly needed!