



July 2007

Next Meetings

Aug 11 – Denis Lane, Westridge RR
13th October Ian Wellings, Currimundi
8th December Mark Ward, Towoomba
(All meetings start at 1.30pm unless advised)

Apology

Sorry I'm rather late with this Newsletter but my computer has been down since mid-June. At that stage the Newsletter was half done but I couldn't get to it to complete it. I was away for some of that time and that didn't help. Nevertheless I got to see the Perth Model Train Show then a trip up to Cairns gave me a chance to drop in on Bert Toogood at Innisfail.

I flew up to Cairns but came back by Tilt Train. This was most interesting and I spent most of the time with my "in seat" monitor selected to show the drivers view, speed, distance to the next stop, etc. Things have changed! Most bridges, even very small ones and culverts now have guard rails with huge cast pointed ends. Those not yet done usually have the rails lying between tracks waiting for rail crews to install them.

Another interesting feature is that nearly all bridges and culverts are ballasted, including the few wooden trestles left. The only ones not ballasted are the large steel types with open girders below the rails.

Now all of this was a good lesson especially after recently reading the landmark Railroad Model Craftsman for May '07. If you can, get a copy of the article by David G. Lambert "Open deck railroad bridges", all 18 pages of it and study it. This is one of the best articles I've ever read in the MR press and it's backed up by lots of definitive pictures.

Well that was a long apology but I'll try and make it up to you somehow.

Gathering at Bob Brown's

Glenn Steven's, our superintendent, gave members the latest Association news and handed out the new Australasian Region cloth patch, and

very attractive they are too with their silver background.

He then brought us up to date on "house-keeping" notices within the NMRA. One of the segments was about the progress work on the display layout. Sadly, there was also the news about the theft of some of our tools, the 40 jumpers we made up to connect each module, all of our screws, 3 tins of paint and various other items. There was nothing that we as NMRA could have done to prevent this theft and worse still is that almost none of the items stolen would be of much use to anyone except us! This means that to meet our schedule to be at the Toowoomba Train Show required a Herculean effort on the part of the workers.

Show-and-Tell was very quiet this time but Laurie McLean showed us his beautiful scratchbuilt Silverton station made of styrene. He then displayed his scratchbuilt wooden mine, evidence that he handles different mediums equally well. Laurie also had some very realistic conifers and a spreading tree that he had made, bridge piers cut from plaster and plaster castings of a stone wall. We look forward to seeing these and more of his work on the home layout.

We then moved to the train rooms and found that Bob is well on the way to going DCC. This is no mean feat for Bob considering the huge number of locos he owns.



Bob Brown with one of his many Santa Fe locos running on his layout. Perhaps he is wondering how long it's going to take to convert all to DCC! Or is he watching for a puff of blue smoke!

Apparently he is offsetting the cost by the sale of some rather desirable items. As usual his layout worked flawlessly and some other members tried out locos on his lengthy track.

Our group is now a very cohesive and friendly group so the social side of proceedings was well catered for around the afternoon tea table.

I noticed Bob Cuffe with a couple of new book purchases. Denis Lane keeping everyone cheery, Graham Emery telling us about some new purchases that we will hear more of in the future, Ross Evans handing out some surplus magazines and being the doyen of knowledge about US prototype.

Thanks go to Bob Brown for having us all there and for being our congenial host.

The Toowoomba Show and the Display Layout

The Toowoomba Show as usual was a beauty. We took our display layout along and this time after some soul searching, we have decided to make major changes and finish it before showing it again. On the Saturday night after the dinner, we were invited around to Mark Ward's layout. Graham Emery was heard to mutter after being stunned by its brilliance, "I'm going home to cry myself to sleep!"

Once again the NMRA presented a trophy to what we judged as the best layout in the show. This year the British layouts did particularly well. The beautifully executed Lydcombe Vale won the competition and you will read more about that in Mainline.

As always the traders there provided some new merchandise and as usual I came away thinking, "Why didn't I buy that" Our table full of geniuses won first prize at the dinner for the RR Trivia and that gave us some joy. Since the Show there has been a lot of discussion and action about how to make setting up and dismantling more efficient. We also believe that having presented the layout in an unfinished condition for two shows, it must be in a finished condition before it is shown again.

Comment

How often have you heard someone say, "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like". Perhaps they are quite able to choose art works of reasonable merit but haven't analysed why. Have a look at your grandchildren's Beatrix Potter books. Now you must be saying, "He's really lost it this time".

Did you know that those delightful scenes in the Peter Rabbit stories are very accurate illustrations that Beatrix Potter did by looking out of the windows of "Hill Farm", her home in the Lakes District of England? What the heck has all of this got to do with MR? If you look at those Potter paintings you will see strong representational

watercolours that really appeal. You connect with the paintings. Much the same as you may do when you choose paintings to admire or buy in a gallery Why? The same can be said for so much of the best landscape art. You connect with the paintings!

I would suggest that your connection is because you had to fill in some of the missing bits yourself. In your mind you joined the artist, even if it was the great Turner, Constable, or closer to home Streeton, Roberts, etc. and painted in the bits they didn't. A road disappears over a hill, your mind says it leads to a broader world. A stream disappears behind some trees and you imagine it with a watermill. Your eyes have been transported to things that don't appear within the frame of the painting. Thus the picture becomes much bigger than itself! Because of your involvement you are in the painting on the canvas but unseen.

Now imagine if the painter told you everything that was in the picture; he drew the lot. There is now nothing for you to discover and the painting is less exciting and you mightn't even give it a second glance. Where is all of this leading us?

Well in your railroads, why give the whole story? Have your visitors become involved in your railroad just the same as you did looking at a great painting or a great Ansell Adam's photograph. Your visitors don't even have to pick up a paint brush or a plastering trowel. Naturally they are going to remember your railroad because they built part of it in their minds, that is those bits you didn't or those bits that connect various elements.

If you have a road going over a bridge it doesn't have to lead to a farmhouse or anything in particular. It can seem to. A stream doesn't have to lead all the way under that beautiful bridge you built. It need only give the impression that it does. In fact the base of the bridge may be hidden by other scenic elements.

By doing your scenery this way you will give a much stronger indication that the elements in your world are right and that your trains are running through much more territory than is actually there. Your trains are running through what can be seen and also the parts that aren't even there. Besides, you save yourself a lot of physical building.

Then there is another great advantage. It is much easier to put some perspective into your scenery

so that the distance from the front facia to the backdrop is greatly extended.

Now go back and look at some good landscape paintings in a gallery or in a book or on the web.

In Sir Arthur Streeton's "The Purple Noon's Transparent Might" you see the Hawkesbury River stretching into the distance then it ends abruptly. But its path is "suggested" by the line of trees going to the left and then there is another faint appearance of the river then more suggestion to the left.

David Davies "Evening, Templestowe" shows a dirt road going through a fence. The farmhouse on the right must be accessed by that road even though it is not drawn right to the front door.

Similarly Walter Withers painting "A Bright Winter's Morning" has a road going to the upper left. The town in the upper middle distance is assumed to be connected to this road but the painting doesn't show it.

These three examples are Australian works that illustrate what I have been trying to say. America with its great tradition of realistic painting has many similar examples.

Get down to your local library and grab a comfortable chair then go through a dozen or so books from the art section and you will see what this is all about. See how they extend the scope of the painting? And if you are into scenery or thinking about starting some on your layout, you will save yourself much angst by an easy learning experience from these books.

You will also find several American art books depicting realistic landscape paintings with great ideas that you can apply to your railroad. And just a zany note to finish off, what I have been saying is a little like looking at a beautiful woman, clothed, and allowing your imagination to guess how she looks nude. And that might well be better than the reality.

2008 Convention

We haven't forgotten the Convention and we have some ideas on paper. As we progress we will keep you informed on developments. At the moment the committee is labouring trying out restaurants to find a suitable one for the convention dinner. So far no stomach problems have been reported but I hope that by the time we find a place our bank books won't be too depleted.

Some Observations in the West

As mentioned earlier I visited the Perth Train Show. This was my second visit to the show and I was agreeably surprised at the scope and size of it this year compared to the earlier visit.

There are a lot of modellers in the west modelling W.A. railways. This has been helped by the availability of a lot of locally made, low volume bits and pieces suitable for the western prototypes. Also W.A. railways are modelled in all scales from "N" to "G" scale.

In the west, people use a lot of initiative in all sorts of pursuits. Being so far from the populace eastern states engenders practices not known in the east. For example, bulk buying is common so minimise cartage. Also Perth is much closer to Asia than we are and there is a lot of trading from that area.

The traders at the Show had quite a bit of merchandise that we never see in the east and much of it was very low priced. Some traders had enormous stacks or well known loco brands but at about one third to one half of the price they are sold at here.

The rationale seems to be sell at the Show cheaply to get as many new modellers as possible and then have them as customers for years. In fact I went into one hobby shop a week before the Show and was almost dissuaded from buying being told that all of the things I wanted would be about half price during the Show!

No wonder that AMRA in that state has nearly 500 mostly active members and owns its own premises. The verbal assistance and advice given by people manning railroads and shops was one department that really outshone what we have come to expect here.

I made a casual enquiry about signals and in half an hour received excellent advice and a very enlightened lesson on what signals mean. Up to then I thought I was reasonably well informed but I came away really excited about signals. And that sort of thing happened all day.

I spend about 3 – 4 hours at the Brisbane Show but I was at this one all day. Not all of this was in among the exhibits as I spent an interesting hour over lunch talking to someone I'd never met before giving me loads of information about British Railways. A cup of coffee latter in their al fresco eating area gave me another interesting hour with an expert on the Rock Island.

NMRA DIVISION 1 (QUEENSLAND)
(www.Zelmeroz.com/anmra-1)

The Show is held in June at the Claremont Show Grounds and for their long weekend, the suburban trains stop at the Showgrounds station for the convenience of Show attendees.

Feedback Needed

While I was in the North. I asked Bert Toogood how we could better service NMRA members a long way from the southeast populous area.

Bert said that although he couldn't get to our gatherings he was happy with the contacts he did make. He did suggest though that we could publish a list of inexpensive and clean motels and accommodation near the Exhibition Grounds before the May AMRA Train Show. This would encourage some country members to come down.

I'm sure Glenn would welcome any other suggestions that country members might make on this topic