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JULY 2009

**Coming Meetings**

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**July 18<sup>th</sup> Graham Emery**

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**August 15/16 Lynn Zelmer (Rockhampton)**

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**September 19<sup>th</sup> Justin Walker**

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**October 3/4/5 Sydney Anniversary  
Convention**

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**November 21<sup>st</sup> Ian Wellings**

All meetings start at 1.30pm unless otherwise stated.

**Toowoomba Train Show**

As always, many of us were eager to be part of the Toowoomba Train Show organised by the members of the Darling Downs MR Club. Our module group took their lengths of industrial switching yards to be once again joined together for some operating fun and to explain to the public what we were doing and the advantages of the NMRA.

The system was joined and running in very quick time which gave us a chance to help others and to just socialise. The Toowoomba Show is a very friendly affair and the DDMRC people are excellent hosts.

The Saturday night dinner was as always, top-class and at this event the dedication of the new Club rooms within the show grounds, was made by the local MLA, Mike Horan. This year we missed out completely in the trivia competition so next year we had better do more reading and less modelling!

Our modules ran well all weekend, they drew much interest and hopefully enough to get some more people interested in this great hobby.

**Cross Purposes**

One of my other interests besides MR is ornithology, the study of birds.

What does this have to do with trains?

As I said in the last Newsletter, my father was a Q.G.R. sign-writer and as such he had to know what lettering to put onto each type of wagon, carriage and locomotive within the system.

In the years following World War I and leading into the Depression years, many men made a living by making ant-bed tennis courts. When I was a kid there were hundreds of these around Brisbane and other areas. Most in the cities, have been since sold for housing allotments.

It seems that there was sufficient business in this ant-bed material for a special wagon although they weren't numerous but were allotted a class designation.

Paradise Parrots nest in termite mounds and these mounds were considered excellent material for tennis courts.

Q.G.R. in fact had a special classification for wagons that used to be used to bring termite (ant-bed) material from the Gayndah area to Brisbane. They weren't numerous but my father had the alphabet letter classification in a notebook. Unfortunately, I can't remember what that designation was.

Nests must have been destroyed and along with habitat destruction, predation by feral animals, etc. this most beautiful of parrots became extinct.

One of the great disappointments in Australian ornithology, is that the Paradise Parrot only became extinct in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Ornithologists have wrestled with the reasons why this happened. The last authenticated sighting was in 1923 with one or two possible sightings in the late '20's.

In this way we can probably say that the making of tennis-courts from materials carried by the railway contributed towards the demise of this beautiful Paradise Parrot.

**Comment**

To weather or not to weather - that is the question. You spend buckets of money and/or hours of valuable time building or buying as close as possible models which generally arrive home in pristine condition.

It is hard at the start to now get this wonderful thing out and go over it to make it look used and grungey.

But there is no doubt about it, unweathered equipment often looks toylike or plastic-ie. You need to develop a mentality that says, "It isn't finished until the thing is weathered then Dullcoted". At first this is hard. So try making the item or buying it and then displaying it in your house. Put it somewhere that it will be seen often and do so without weathering. Hopefully, it will only be a couple of weeks before you will start to notice that something isn't quite right.

That deficiency might well be weathering. Allow yourself to get blasé about this model if you can and then bite the bullet and do something about it.

There have been numerous articles in the modelling media about this facet of our hobby. One nice thing, you don't have to be too finicky. I have read articles on what shape and form the weathering should be done for various models but even a thin blast in roughly correct places looks a lot better than no weathering at all.

If you are like me you build things in fits and starts. That often means that when you come back to something after a spell away from it, you have to think or make a list of the work that needs to be done to complete the model. Always ensure that weathering and Dullcoting are the last two requirements before you list this model on your inventory.

I have found it best to Dullcote last as that way you don't leave finger marks in the weathering which look even worse than the untouched model.

If it is still hard to do, just try a very diluted coat on appropriate places and leave it at that. This might be a fine weathering that can only just be detected when comparing an untouched model. Fair enough, there are good reasons why a model may have light weathering. I still think that it looks better than to do nothing.

A word of warning though. I have seen models that are too overdone and these aren't pretty sights. So it is safer to start with the light touch.

We usually think of rolling stock in this regard but structures should be weathered too. The easiest here is the roof of structures that are lineside. They would soon get a coating of coal or diesel black on them in the real world. Buildings further from the track would have less black on their roofs but now the rust or other weathering would show through.

There is nothing that makes your buildings look more anchored to the ground than the light spray of your particular earth colour around the base of the building's walls. Mud is splashed up by raindrops and even building surrounded by concrete show some form of "ground" blending here.

Buildings in dry areas would show less than those in wetter areas.

Think about it and consider doing signals, bridges, rails, industries, etc.

Finally, nothing needs weathering more I believe, than the vehicles we decorate our layouts with. How incongruous they look when all around them is flat and well weathered. I admit that most cars receive an occasional clean and that car manufacturers put as shiny as possible finish on their cars. But the fact remains that in a model this shininess duplicated by model manufacturers does look out of place. So here it is often preferable to spray your vehicles with a semi-flat coating if you wish to represent a well-cleaned car.

Semi-flat finishes can be got in various degrees by mixing Dullcote and Glosscote together. By now your railroad will be starting to really blend in a prototypical manner. After you think you have finished go over it again with a very critical eye and weather or dull those bits that you missed out on.

All of this should go a long way to your own more satisfied feeling about your models. It will also elicit favourable comment, but your commentators may not realise what it is that makes your railroad look wonderful. That may be the ultimate accolade for your model display – to admire but not be sure why it is admirable.

### **Sydney Convention October**

It's now only a few months away and if you have checked the NMRA-AR website you will see most of the programme. This looks outstanding and to whet the appetite you can go and meet and talk to some of the top American modellers who will be coming out. I know that some of you are thinking more about operations and the operations guru, Tony Koester is definitely coming now. Having heard him speak before I think that's got to be worth the registration fee!

Charlie Getz is coming and there are few who could put a serious clinic to listeners with so

much wit. You don't just learn; you are entertained!

I made my accommodation bookings at the Ibis Thornleigh and the rate charged is very good for Sydney.

**DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER AND BOOK YOUR ACCOMMODATION FOR THE NMRA-AR 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION IN SYDNEY 3/4/5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER. CHECK OUT OUR AUSTRALASIAN REGIONAL WEBSITE.**

**Laurie McLean's  
Very Tiny Brakeman's Lamp**

With modern electronics model railroading can go to many places not previously thought possible. Our own Laurie McLean is one who is often raising the bar on the standards of model-making once only in our dreams.

Take a look at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azOKwZBQ8s>

I'm sorry, another of those long and complicated address but I suppose that's the price we pay for having a universal clientele on the web. Be sure to turn the sound on too.

[Correction:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azOKvVZBQ8s>]

### Modules

With the success of our Division 1 modules we have had several requests for rules and standards so others can participate. Our Module Co-ordinator, Paul Skehan is putting together a formal list of Rules and Standards and when that is complete we will publish them in Newsletter.

We modeller railroaders are dreamers (sometimes more than doers!) so if you could be tempted, start dreaming what your module might look like. Remember, it is a point-to-point industrial switching layout so that gives you quite a wide scope.

We have so far a couple of oil depots, an l.c.l. type storage shed, a warehouse, passenger station for commuting workers, a pickles works, a jam factory, a candy factory and a canning plant. There is one "fiddle yard", one interchange and a couple of team tracks.

I have given you these industry functions in case you don't want to duplicate and to give

you an idea of what you could consider as an industry to work in with one of those mentioned. For example, a sugar refinery, or an abattoir or a chemical plant producing refined salt or vinegar. There are still hundreds of possibilities not considered here that may appeal to you.

My own module reflects a preference for certain types of rolling stock. I use boxcars to bring in raw produce, sugar for jam, etc. and to take out manufactured food items. I even have need of ventilated boxcars.

Refrigerator cars also bring in fruit for jam, vegetables for pickling and beef carcasses for canning.

When you plan your module think also that you may need hoppers for coal to keep steam plants operating, gondolas to take out ash, tank cars to bring in cleaning fluids and maybe the odd flat car to bring in replacement plant, etc. A cement works might have need of covered hoppers. The possibilities are numerous and you could design your module so that it too uses the type of rolling stock you like.

After two shows now, one thing we have found is that you don't need a vast number of freight cars. A few cars and a switching loco is all that is necessary. Extra cars may be brought along but used mainly to vary what you use after taking your original batch off the layout. You would be surprised how quickly yards can get jammed up with superfluous freight cars.

For we participants, there are many advantages. We are getting some running on a layout that could possibly be used at home. That's an advantage for those who don't have a layout at the moment.

It gives us a chance to try out techniques before they are implemented in the home layout.

We are all talking railroads a lot more and learning from each other.

We are ensuring our equipment operates well as we don't want to be caught out in front of spectators.

### Interchange Operations

One of the best operations to have in MR is the interchange. This can be a simple single line connecting two lines of different ownership or a complicated affair as you would expect at a large terminal.

Large terminals are out for most of us so we would generally be more interested in smaller interchange set-ups. One of the best articles I have read in recent years about this form of operation was in **Railroad Model Craftsman March 2009** in an article titled “The Litchfield interchange”. Here four Class 1 railroads are involved with a shortline and an interurban. Imagine the plethora of RR equipment that might go through this junction yet it is only a few sidings and connecting tracks. All of its functions could be easily modelled on a medium sized (for Australia) home layout. For those interested in operation or considering an interchange, I suggest you read this article first. There are operations that seem devoid of efficiency and that are rather, efforts by enterprising competitive operators to make a few dollars for their company. This gives the modeller a chance to have unexpected freight cars and motive power on their layout. As they so often say in the magazines, “Somewhere, every possibility has been done on the prototype”. Much of this article is appropriate for our modular layout as we do have one interchange module at the moment and the fiddle yard could handle some of it as well. Even better, if we assume that our modular layout is somewhere in Illinois, then the small city of Lichfield is only 240 miles south of Chicago and so influenced by the ‘railroad capital’.

### **Fresh Ideas**

*The editor would like to hear any stories about how you became interested in model railroading. Please send your story in for future publication. I'm sure other members will be intrigued.*

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**SEE YOU IN SYDNEY**