

“Making your Layout look Real”

by Peter Kennedy

Model Railways and movie making have much in common, both create scenes or sets to represent what cannot be seen or experienced in the real world. The better the acting and the more realistic the “sets” the more we become engrossed and enjoy the movie. The same could be said for Model Railways. Realistic rollingstock, infrastructure and operations increase the “realism” of our model railway as do the “sets” in a movie.

A model railway can be at your home, a friends place or a model railway club. Depending on which of these we are involved with, will determine the extent of our decision making in the planning, construction and operation. Whatever model railway we are involved with we would all have a common aim. That is to enjoy a model railway that in every possible respect represents the “real” railway, past or present. There are many ways to create or improve “realism” on your model railway. Lets briefly explore some of the ways to achieve this.

Design:-

It is most important to give much thought to the type of railway you wish to model. Factors to consider include the space available, money, time, gauge, access, a movable show layout or a fix layout. Time spent in planning is never wasted.

Operations:-

The type of operations should be relevant to the type of railway you are modeling. Almost all railways have some form of operating, procedures or timetables. To add “realism” to your railway you can begin with “sequence” running, and progress to operating the ‘card’ system or running to a timetable using a fast clock. To further enhance your operational realism it could include shunting or other movements around your yards and depots.

Further realism can be created by regulating the speed of your trains. We have all been to model train exhibitions where the “realism” of a model railway has been destroyed by the ridiculously fast speed being run by its trains. To create realistic speeds one should copy “big Brother”. A suburban E.M.U. will start and stop much faster than a 10,000 ton coal train. We should slow our trains when passing through sharp curves, curved points and run speeds appropriate to the type of train being run. Slow, smooth starts and stops are the way to go, sometimes it may be necessary to update your control device to achieve this.

Sound:-

In recent years "sound" has been introduced to model railways. The correct use of sound in our locomotives, station announcements, towns, church bells, sirens etc. all add realism to our layout. A word of warning though, I find "sound" is often overdone. Too loud, too much, locomotives out of beat, etc. The correct use of whistles, drain cocks, shut off sound downhill etc, all add to the "realism" we are seeking.

Rollingstock:-

Many of us started clockwork, cheap, or tinsplate locomotives and as time passed we upgraded our locos and rollingstock as we become more aware of scale, weathering, paint schemes etc. We added load to our wagons, improved their rollability etc.

Signals:-

The best way to create realism in operations is to have operating signals either colour light or semaphore. Failing this then at least add non operating signals, ground signals, signal cabins etc. Signals must be appropriate for the type of railway being modeled.

Lighting:-

Realism is added by lighting on your locomotives, carriages, depots and towns and perhaps "night operations" using model lighting or dimming or turning off room lights.

Scenery:-

It is scenery on which to now concentrate as I believe it is most important to the realism of your layout. Modellers of modern railways are at an advantage in that they can visit, photograph and perhaps, ride on the railway they are modeling. However there are many of us who are modeling railways of yesterday and yet have never seen the scenes they are copying.

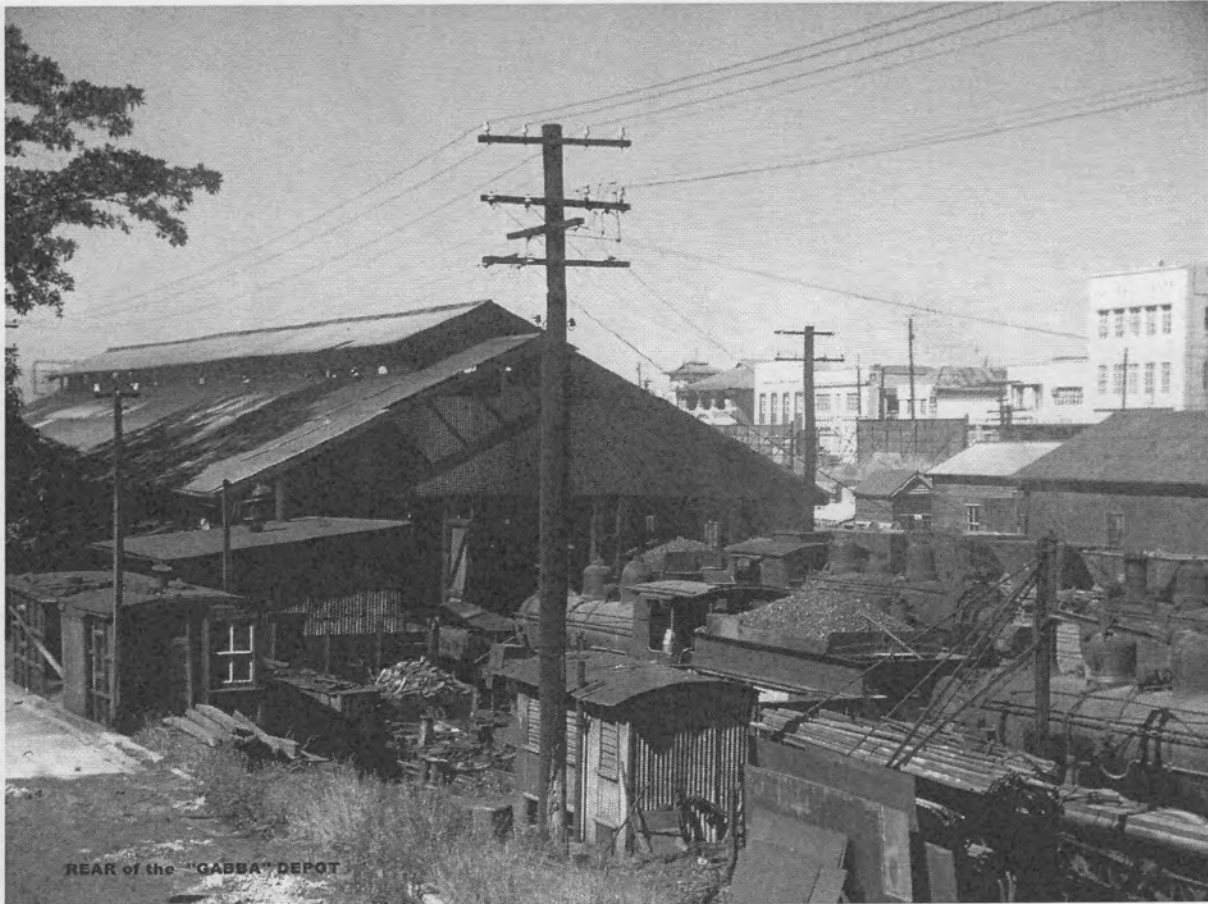
Here are some photos of passed railway scenes which show a wealth of detail which when added to your model depots etc will add the extra "realism" to your layout.



Wooloongabba Loco Depot (Eastern end).

By observing this photo we note the following:-

- a) The general sooty drabness of the old galvanized iron locomotive shed.
- b) The use of old box wagon bodies for huts for yard staff.
- c) Piles of ashes and a wheel barrow used to remove them
- d) Piles of loco lighting up wood.
- e) Stand with drivers toolboxes.



Woolloongabba Loco Depot (Western end).

We observe:-

- a) Coal hoppers and open wagons
- b) Old wagons converted to "huts"
- c) Boiler tubes
- d) Bin full of old brake blocks
- e) Locomotive spare parts, springs, buffers, blast pipes etc
- f) Toilet block
- g) Small crane
- h) Old Sleepers

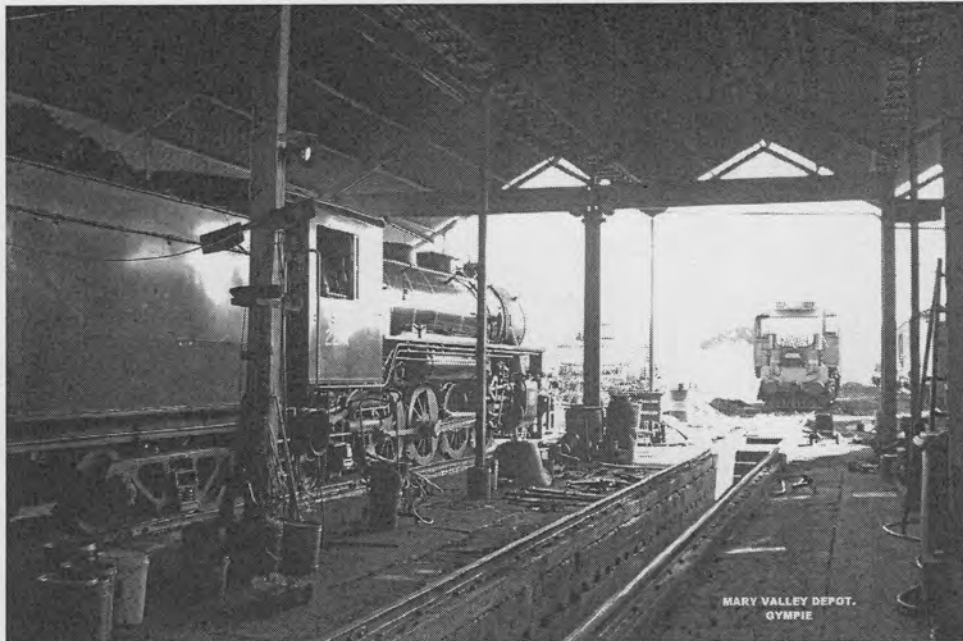


Warwick Loco Depot

In this photo we visit Warwick depot, a great country QR depot begging to be modeled.

In the photos we see:-

- a) Turntable
- b) Old wagons bodies as huts
- c) Brick arches stacked
- d) Lighting
- e) Coal Stage in the distance



Mary Valley Railway Depot Gympie.

This photo shows the usual scene inside a loco depot:-

- a) Inspection Pit
- b) Locomotive parts
- c) Drums
- d) Leads and hoses.



In this photo we see a HO model steam depot and find many items seen at the “Gabba” depot reflected around the model depot. You can appreciate the “realism” created by the detail.



In this second view of the “Depot” you will observe more of the items which when added to scene the “realism” of a real steam loco depot.

See Annex “A” for a list of such items of interest found around an old steam depot.



This scene of yesteryear is to show what the end of a busy station might look like. Here we see both the mechanical cabin and baggage /cloak room. Realism is created by the inclusion of many small features such as, a small set of scales, the porter carrying bags, the push bike at the rear. There is a baggage trolley with boxes on the platform.

The signal cabin features a half hidden signalman, open windows, the silver topped levers, and outside walkways. Outside is a dolly signal with the usual ladders, counterweights, lamps are out of site.



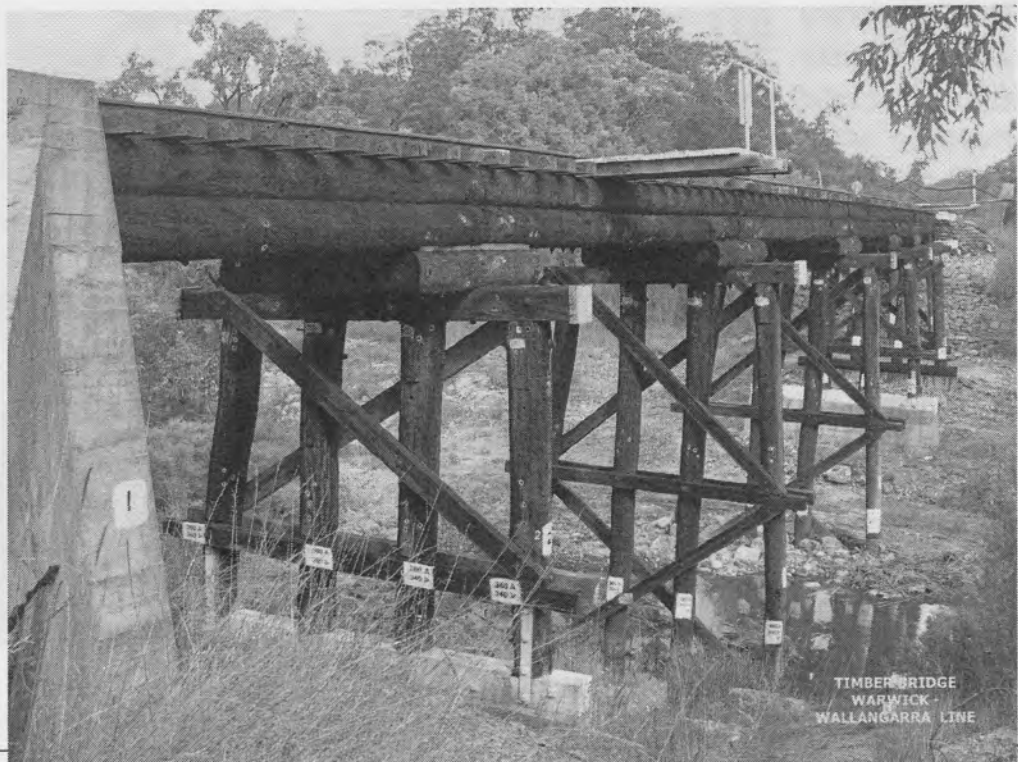
This photo shows a N.S.W. signal cabin at Hamilton, it clearly shows the interlocking rodding associated with these cabins. You can make your own rodming to create more realism around your Signal Cabin or it can be purchased from some hobby shops.

In this relaxed scene showing two bridge carpenter's applying a final coat to this recently repaired bridge on a light industrial line. In the background is a gravel road awaiting a road bridge yet to be constructed over the creek. Note



BRIDGE REPAIRS by LES DOWNEY

the detail in the scene, the two workers certainly bring it to life. Note the bolts in the bridge timbers, the old punt carrying unused timber blocks, tools etc. The stream appears to be running under the bridge, then slowing as it enters the larger stream. Stones have been placed around the piers to prevent erosion.



TIMBER BRIDGE
WARWICK -
WALLANGARRA LINE

Making your Layout look Real.

Note that QR used round timbers in their bridges, most railways used square sawn timber. In this photo notice the different abutments, concrete wall at the near end and stonework at the far end. Some piers are on concrete bases, some not. Note also the marking on white background. Timber bridging make great models.

The people in this photo are telling a story. "The trains are late" Yes, people bring realism to any model railways, there are so many ways they can give life to a scene.



This temporary scene depicts a minor traffic diversion while a street lamp is being repaired by a worker on a truck tower.

Such everyday scenes certainly create extra realism on your layout, however, they should be only temporary. To create such interest, change the scene and location from time to time.



The use of people, motor vehicles, animals etc are essential in adding realism. Ensure they are appropriate to the scene and time era. Some years ago, I added cars and trucks to my layout. As I was modeling early 1950's several visitors were quick to point out that some of my motor vehicles were 1970/2000 models. You can see how the incorrect use of items detract from my "realism". Subsequently my grandchildren benefited from the removal of modern cars.



In bygone years when railways were the lifeline of country, just about any town of any size has a station, goods shed, stockyards and a Station Masters house usually in the far corner of the station yard.

Today, sadly, both the railway and its associated facilities are gone. It is fitting, then to show you a typical model by Arthur Hayes of a country Station Masters house.

The following features are important in creating the "realistic" model of a country SM's house in the 1960's.

- a) Garage for the VW.
- b) Back yard Toilet.
- c) Wood heap with chopping block, some chopped wood ready for the wood burning stove.
- d) Chook pen with chook house for roosting and laying eggs.
- e) Veggie Garden with a few chook that got out.
- f) Cloth Line made from timber and fork posts to prop up the line.
- g) Water tank.

- h) Chopped wood beside the back door.
- i) Dog, looking at the chooks in the veggie garden.
- j) Bikes and trailer beside the garage/house
- k) Gardens around the house and garage
- l) Children playing on the road, one with ball, the other on a scooter.
- m) Garbage track collecting the rubbish with the house bin beside the road.
- n) Timber boundary fence around the house.
- o) Pigeon on the garage roof

In conclusion, I believe that realism on your model railway is also dependant on the level of your imagination. All model railways require some imagination. At one end of the scale there are those who are quite happy just watching their trains, on the other end of the scale are those who imagine they are railway workers e.g. engine drivers driving his train, a signalman controlling signals and points, a train controlling the movements of several trains at once. Their imagination can include the appropriate conversations between drivers, guards, shunters, controllers etc.

Thus the level of "realism" created by your locomotives, scenery, operations etc, plus your level of your imagination all increases your overall enjoyment of your model railway.

That's what we aim to do here today.

Annex "A"

What you might find around a railway depots.

Major Items:-

Engine Shed, Turntable, Breakdown Train, Store Sheds, Coal Stage, Water Tank, Cranes, Foreman Office, Old wagon bodies, Toilets, Oil Store, Wagon Repair Shed. Ashpits, Inspection Pits,

Other Items:-

Lathe, Drill, Shaping Machines, Wheels, Spare Parts, Drums, Coal Stack, Ashes, Wheelbarrow, Lighting up Wood, spare Brick Arches, Buffers, Tubes, Driver's tool box rack. Bike Rack, Front end Loader, Floodlight Tower/poles, Area Lighting. Brake equipment (Blocks, cylinders, bogies, beams, springs, pull rods etc). New and Old Sleepers, Rail.

Wagons:-

Coal, Sand, Ashes, Rubbish.

This list may not include all the items found at a railway depot.