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MainLine

National Model Railroad Association Inc - Australasian Region

Apr-May-Jun 2000

Volume 17 Number 2



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NMRA - SETTING THE STANDARDS IN RAILROAD MODELLING

INTRODUCTION TO THE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

By Ken Scales, MMR



In previous issues I have written about what the AP program offers and how to get started. However this assumes that everyone knows what I am writing about. I have prepared this article to explain what it is about to members of the organization who have had little or no exposure to the program.

The Achievement Program is one of the most rewarding activities run by the NMRA. The Achievement Program is like a travel guide to help you on your journey through the world of model railroading. It provides an incentive to learn the many crafts and skills, which are, part of the hobby and gives a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. It is tailored to suit all gauges, scales and prototypes. It recognizes the wide range of interests of model railroaders and also service to the hobby.

How does it work? The program starts with an introduction called the "Golden Spike". If you already have a home layout you probably have most of the requirements to earn a Golden Spike. This part of the program is designed as an incentive to improve our modeling by reaching a fairly simple goal. To obtain a Golden Spike you need to:

- Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or superdetailed commercial kits.
- Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.
- Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or superdetailed commercial kits
- Lay three types of trackage (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.) which must be properly ballasted, installed on proper roadbed and wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously. Commercial trackage may be used
- Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, or lighted buildings.

There is a required standard for all sections of the Achievement Program. This standard is reasonably high but is achievable by most modelers. Models are judged using similar rules to contests. The allocation of points for Achievement Program judging is not as strict as contest judging. This means that your achievements in the hobby can be measured by a standard that is recognized by your fellow modelers. Models that score sufficient points and receive a Merit Award in an NMRA contest are counted towards an Achievement Award.

There are eleven main categories in the Achievement Program. These are grouped into four broad areas which are:

- Building Model Railroad Equipment
- Building Model Railroad Settings
- Railroad Construction and Operation
- Service to the hobby.

If you enjoy building cars and locomotives there are two categories to consider. These are Master Builder Cars and Master Builder Motive Power.

If you have an artistic streak and enjoy the scenes surrounding trains there are Master Builder Structures, Master Builder Scenery and Master Builder Prototype Models.

Maybe you have good mechanical or electrical skills. If this is the case there is Model Railroad Engineer Civil or Model Railroad Engineer Electrical. If you enjoy operating trains there is Chief Dispatcher.

For those who like working with people and rendering service there are Association Volunteer and Association Official. If you like to write, take photos and give clinics there is Model Railroad Author.

The ultimate honor bestowed by the Achievement Program is the title of Master Model Railroader (MMR). This is awarded to those who have qualified for seven achievement awards.

This is an over simplification of what the Achievement Program is about. It can however guide you through the learning process and get you more involved in the hobby. It will also help you to get to know other members of the association and allow your achievements to be measured by standard that is recognized by your fellow modelers.

Where do I start? Call or write the Regional AP Chairperson, who is listed in the Directory of the NMRA Mainline Magazine. He will either supply you with the information you require, or he will put you in contact with your local Vice AP Chairperson. Request a copy of the Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) form and guidance in preparing the documentation for the category involved. Also, request any forms that you might need. All AP regulations and associated forms are available on the NMRA web site.

www.nmra.org

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FOR SALE

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Notice of Annual General Meeting for NMRA Inc Australian Region

The Annual General Meeting will be held on
Saturday 15th July 2000 at 3.00pm.
20 Orchard Avenue, Winston Hills, NSW

A G E N D A

1. Approval of AGM Minutes held on 13th June 1999
2. President's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Election of Officers
5. Resolution to allow the next meeting of the Board of Directors to approve the Minutes of the AGM

NOTE: Only agenda items can be discussed at the AGM.

Michael Flack
Secretary

Schedule of Divisional Meetings New South Wales

All meetings start 2:00 Saturday unless indicated differently.

15 Jul	Alan Garbutt	20 Orchard ave, Winston Hills	9686-4270
12 Aug	Sowerby Smith	174 fullers road, Chatswood.	94115726
09 Sep 12 Noon	Wyong District Model Railroad Club,	114 Emu Drive, San Remo.	
	(sausage sizzle, \$2.00. Further information: Garry Flack 4393-1634 after 7.30 pm)		
	Take Doyalson turnoff from Newcastle Freeway.		
14 Oct	John and Natalie Montgomery	12 Lindwall Place, Shalvey.	9628-9921
18 Nov	Mike Bartlett	158 Wallumatta Road, Newport.	9999-4966
09 Dec 12 Noon	John Baker,	12 Roseberry road, Kellyville.	9629-2349
tbc	There will be a module meet in January 2001. Details next issue		

Canberra

All meetings start at 2:00 pm Saturday unless indicated differently.

8 July	John Bullen	39 Buvelot Street, Weston	02 6288-7312
12 August	Host wanted		
2 September	Host welcomed		
30 September	Host sought		
28 October	Tony Payne	24 Darmody Street, Weetangera	02 6254-6985
25 November	Stephen O'Brien	138 Nemerang Crescent, Waramanga	02 6288- 3614

Queensland

The Queensland meeting schedule is proposed. For details of venue and host, please contact Glenn Stevens on (07) 3201-5022.

15 July, 16 September, 2 December

Victoria

All meetings start 11:30 Sunday unless indicated differently.

9 July	Peter MacDonald	4 Boyd Street, Bacchus Marsh	03 5367- 3601
	<i>Electronic Controllers</i>		
13 August	Bob Backway	4 Tor Road, Belgrave Heights	03 9754-6502
	<i>Sound & model RR</i>		
10 September	Steve Cullen	67 Mowbray Crescent, Melton	03 9747- 6267
	<i>Figure Painting</i>		

On the cover: Heavy Mikado 1524 of the Missouri Pacific Railroad crosses the Rock Creek Bridge with steam hissing from cylinders and smoke streaming from its stack. Dieter Chidel took this great photograph, and those on pages 10 - 12 on Rod Smith's vast layout. Turn to page 10 for the full story on the MPRR.

Lest We Forget

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of the following members.

Bruce Turnbull Boambee NSW Tom Ruediger Sedana SA John Trelease Fullarton SA

MainLine

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of the
NATIONAL MODEL
RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

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Text Messenger **John Saxon**
Consultant **Dieter Chidel**

Contributors this Issue

Martin Boyask
Donald Davis
Gary Norwood
Gerry Hopkins
Grant McAdam

SUBMISSIONS: MainLine welcomes articles, photographs, drawings, cartoons and other railroad modelling related material as contributions to the mutual enjoyment of the hobby by the membership. Material should have wide appeal and preferably be sent by email or post to the editor. Articles may be submitted on 3.5" computer disks in any Windows or Macintosh based word processing format. Sharp photos, either B/W or Colour are welcome. Don't own a computer? That's fine - typewritten articles are also welcome.

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National Model Railroad Association
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Willoughby NSW 2068

President's Report Problems and Challenges



President Geoff Hoad

As you will see from the second part of the member survey report in this issue we, as an association, are faced with a number of opportunities and challenges. In addition, there are a number of external influences, both social and economic, which add to the pressures the hobby and the NMRA face. Let me highlight some of these so that you are aware of the central issues.

The cost of membership is something that you and we, the Board of Directors (BOD), have been very aware of for a number of years. The cost of Dues has crept up and the value of the dollar has declined. Right now we are faced with another increase from the US and the Australian Dollar continues to hold around the US 60 cents mark. Past BODs have tried different solutions, such as absorbing increases. I think these have all been logical solutions, but unfortunately the core problem remains. You, the membership has signalled to the BOD that these increases concern you too. I therefore believe that we need to examine a range of solutions that go beyond traditional approaches. While we need solutions that are innovative, we must ensure that they neither compromise the way the association functions, nor our Articles of Association. There is an innovative solution: - we just have to find it.

Another issue is membership itself. To remain viable, the association requires a strong, stable membership base. The challenges here are twofold. The first is to get new members; the second is to retain the members we have currently enrolled. I have an opinion I would like to share with you. I know the efforts to gain new members are critical, but more importantly I think we have got to address the issue of how we service and support our members so that they stay with us over the long term. But here's the rub. As we are a voluntary association, the only services we can provide are the ones our voluntary members are willing and able to provide. In other words, yes we can increase services, but no, we can't do that without you. The BOD is examining ways of getting more members (the ones who want to, that is) to help support initiatives (more on this in the future) but I am convinced the value we have is ourselves. What I mean by that is the Australasian Region has a huge "talent bank" of people and skills, but we are not capitalising on these

We need innovative solutions that don't change the way the Association functions.

When talking about membership, many people automatically think of younger people. Many people believe we should be actively promoting membership to younger population. I agree, but only to a point. I believe we are competing for the attention of young people in an age where instant entertainment is a fact of life. The cost of railroad modelling is often cited as an excuse as to why younger members do not participate. I do not agree. They say that they cannot afford trains, but they can afford Sony Playstation and the games that with computer games. I believe that entertainment is now based on instant gratification. I can do it NOW when I want and it does not take me too much time. Speaking of which, younger people (and us for that matter) do not have much time. What do model railroads require??? So the problem is not one of money, it is of the choices we offer, compared to other forms of entertainment. That is why we should do two things. Firstly, we should promote the hobby in general with the aim of attracting young people to the hobby sometime in the future (which we have been doing very successfully with the layout at shows). Secondly, spend the time and money we would have invested in getting younger members on recruiting "older" members. Don't agree? Then go back to the survey and look at our age demographics.

Finally, we need to recognise that technology has had an impacted on our membership and it is likely to extend its grip in the future. Electronic communications are not favoured by all. But understand that two facts exist. One, the BOD will be paying more attention to how we can use electronic media to service and offer benefits to members. Two, we will not do so at the expense of members who are not going that way.

The real message here is that your BOD is very aware of the issues that concern all of us and is continually seeking ways to address them so that we can secure our future. The survey gave us a great opportunity to make changes for the benefit of all members, and that is what we shall do.

Geoff Hoad

Sydney

by Steve Chapman

March Meeting.

About 40 members and partners travelled to David Latham's home at Oatley for the March meeting where once again we enjoyed Southern hospitality and some excellent modelling.

Since our last visit, David has advanced with his scenery with the mine area particularly looking good. His use of Life-Like kits to represent company houses was notable and his American Model Builders depot drew admiring glances. We look forward to seeing more of David's evolving layout.

With president Geoff Hoad away in Melbourne, trustee David North handled the formalities including inviting the membership to nominate for positions at the upcoming Board of Director's elections.

In response to a question with regard to financial reports, after David commented that treasurer Eric Hodgson was always available to answer member's individual questions, he asked if the meeting wanted financial matters to be discussed at regular meetings. The

consensus was that minimal time should be devoted to formalities to allow more time for the "Fun" side of the Hobby and that financial matters therefore should not be routinely reported.

Member Lyndon Spence later addressed the meeting, recommending that members should investigate the Accurail world wide web site <http://www.elnet.com/~accurail/index.htm> where an index of all US published model railroad magazines can be searched by Category, Keyword, Keyword List, Title, Text, Roadname and Trackplan Name.

The formal part of the afternoon concluded with David North thanking David and Sue Latham for hosting the meeting and putting on a delicious afternoon tea.

May Meeting

Approximately 50 members and guests found the sunny afternoon drive to the Lower Blue Mountains and Bob and Carol Best's N scale layout well worth the trip. Bob has made many improvements to his excellent layout since our last visit and it performed very well throughout the afternoon.

Toni Saxon set up her membership table and was able to help a number of members with enquiries as well as renew expiring

memberships on the spot. Toni will have her records with her at future meetings to help with enquiries, renew memberships and join new members.

Members of the Module Special Interest Group (SIG) held an informal meeting to clarify some operational matters. There was also some discussion on the scenery demonstration to be held at the July Meeting with Allan Garbutt (02 9686 4270) asking interested members to contact him in advance to assist in presenting the clinic.

Gerry Hopkins MMR provided an impromptu clinic on making Peco points DCC friendly. Gerry isolates the frog by using his Dremel to cut through both rails approximately 12/13mm on either side of the frog and he then uses standard metal rail joiners on both ends of the turnout. Gerry cautioned that this would only work when the point rails are electrically isolated from each other as with the Peco point.

The formal part of the afternoon seemed to take no time at all with President Geoff Hoad, sporting his injured arm and shoulder in a sling, complimenting Bob on his layout and, on behalf of those attending, thanking both Bob and Carol for their hospitality. ■■

Canberra

by John Gillies

April activity began with the National Model Railway Exhibition Group's exhibition held at the National Hockey centre in Lyneham over the weekend of 1st and 2nd of April. It was a great success in a new and improved location. Larger than usual crowds attended the two days and the NMRA Division 2 module construction exhibit was well patronised. Many members of the public asked questions and sought advice on all aspects of model railroading and layout construction from the NMRA members who manned our exhibit over the weekend.

Rob Anderson did a marvellous job constructing the three modules on display - two owned by the local NMRA members

and the other owned by John Bienkiewicz. The time and effort spent by Rob purchasing the timber and hardware for the modules, and then constructing them, was fantastic. Using the agreed NMRA *Bulletin* article as a basis, track for the two NMRA modules was laid, wiring which enabled a locomotive to operate over the modules for exhibition purposes and initial ballasting were completed during the exhibition. A section of "from beginning to end" foam scenery, which demonstrated construction and finishing techniques, was completed by Peter Weller-Lewis before the exhibition and this generated a tremendous number of questions from the passers by. A small but diverse display of N, HO and O scale models filled one of Peter's display cases. Peter and Jenice Weller-Lewis kept the masses enthralled with another very

popular outing of his Timesaver switching layout. Old hands and youngsters alike were keenly vying to have a go at John Allen's invention. This exhibition is the major means of recruiting new members in the Canberra region and details of five potential members have been passed to Australasian Region President, Geoff Hoad to enable distribution of a complimentary copy of the latest *MainLine* and a membership form. Thanks again to all who helped at the exhibition.

April Meeting

I hosted the April meeting and gave a short presentation on how I had used the internet to locate photos of prototype freight equipment to match decals sets bought some years ago before I had learned to apply more rigour to my purchases. I hope that this information will be used to produce

more accurate models than can be produced simply by buying a brand X boxcar, painting it and then lettering with the decals I have already accumulated. Images from railroads as diverse as the Bangor & Aroostook; Detroit, Toledo & Ironton; Seaboard Coast Line and Union Pacific served as examples. I mentioned some of the better web pages I had found for reference purposes and even showed Peter Weller-Lewis that many photos of Chesapeake and Ohio steam locomotives (as well as freight cars, passenger cars and structures) could be found. Some members then searched for information on their favourite railroads. Steve Chapman was visiting Canberra during the school holidays and dropped in with his daughter Angela. Progress on my layout has been non-existent for over two and a half years, but I do have hopes of wiring what I have done for DCC operation, after acquiring an Easy DCC system late last year. Perhaps at the next meeting I host...?

May Meeting

Rob Anderson hosted the May meeting and showed that converting a layout to DCC operation using Easy DCC can be done in a reasonably short period of time if one sets their mind to the task and has ready access to Ken Macleay's assistance and experience. Rob had rebuilt large portions of his layout to improve its operating possibilities and the results are very good. The layout operated with trains travelling around the layout in both directions at the same time without troubles. Rob advised those present about his plans to attend the Victorian Convention to gather more information on modelling Victorian railways and gave us a rundown on changes to his layout's theme and how future operating plans would be developed. This would be based on past and future industrial development along the route of his railway. Rob Nesbitt provided an informative session on the recent New Zealand convention he had attended along with photos taken at the convention and on train trips. A

very pleasant afternoon tea and discussion session concluded a good afternoon. Thanks to Rob and Jenny for hosting the meeting.

June Meeting

By Viv Brice

The June meeting was held at Peter Weller-Lewis new home, starting in his fine new study and ending in the family room having travelled there via a superb new layout room. The first item on the agenda was the formal handover of the Division Superintendent's job to me from John Gillies. John has handled this job with distinction for the past 3½ years, and we thanked him for his efforts. I would also like to take this very public opportunity to say thank you again John, for your efforts as Superintendent for the NSW/ACT Division. I hope now that we shall see some progress on the great BN!

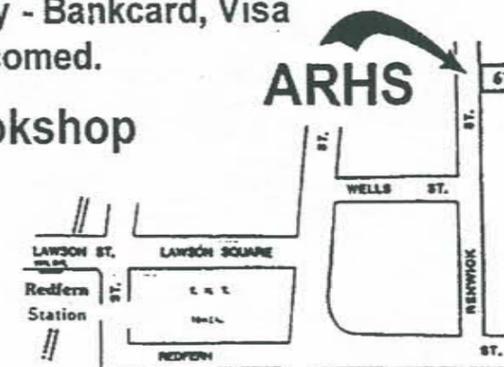
Following some general discussions, Rob Anderson gave a briefing on the recent mini-convention in Melbourne. I talked about the amazing amount of information that can be found on the

Continued on Page 9/...

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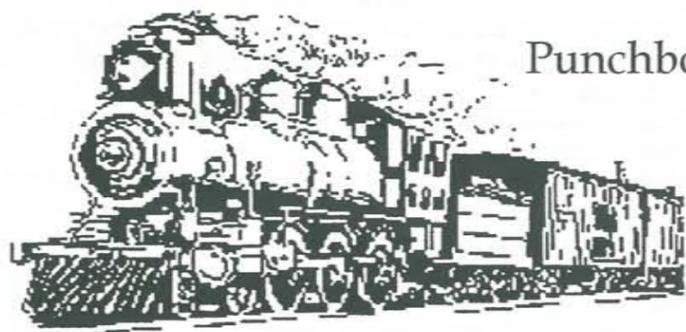
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THE ONLY DRIVE-IN HOBBY SHOP IN SYDNEY

Australasian Region

Member Survey Report

by Geoff Hoad

– Part Two

In the last edition of Mainline I presented the summary of the data collated from the members survey that was conducted earlier in the year. As promised, I will now explain what the numbers mean and identify the issues facing the Australasian Region.

1. Social Network, Skills Sharing and Implications for Membership

First let me address the strengths of the association and what that means for us. We provide a social network where the common bond is trains. Within that network are a large number of modellers with a wide range of skills. These skills are regularly transferred between people on both a formal and informal scale. Members derive great benefit by being part of a group who openly shares information. This extends to the point where a large portion of our members do not model the US prototype. This means that our future membership base is any railroad or railway modeller, irrespective of prototype preference. It further allows us to market ourselves along the basis of being a cooperative friendly association. I have long advocated that we need to create and implement a marketing plan that promotes our strengths. Now we have the specific information by which we can do this.

2. Conventions and Monthly Meetings are Important

A major by-product of our social activities and skills sharing are conventions and monthly meetings. The numbers attending monthly meetings have grown tremendously in the past two years. Moreover, conventions are seen as major attractions by which people can be exposed to information 'bites' and at the same time either observe or participate in a number of active modelling activities, such as clinics and competitions. Conventions are also major financial contributors to the Region's coffers. I know some of you believe that the cost of bringing in keynote speakers from the US is too high. The truth is they attract so many more people that the cost is more than covered. The message here is that we not only have to maintain our schedule of major conventions, but expand and encourage convention activities outside NSW as well. (Well done Victoria for their successful convention in May). Monthly meetings are a problem. In Sydney, they are becoming too successful. We have a lot of people turning up to meetings (up to 60 people at some meetings) and there is a great desire by members to see new layouts. This suggests we need to look at the monthly meeting format and possibly expand it. With regard to availability of new layouts - well, that is up to you.

3. Special Interest Groups are becoming increasingly popular

As we have seen in Sydney, the creation of the Modular SIG and Operations SIG has generated a high level of interest and participation. Members want more opportunities through SIGs to obtain specialist support (a good example here is DCC) or follow specific prototype practices. I am concerned that this is seen as a Sydney phenomenon. Not so. Modular groups started off in Victoria and I think we need to support the creation and maintenance of SIGs in different Divisions so that all members have access to them.

4. Membership Numbers are static

Despite a trend in recent years for slow and steady growth in the number of new members, the size of the Regional membership has remained static.

Recent promotional efforts in the last year have the ball moving again, but to remain viable and to grow we need to encourage new members. This is of great concern to us all. However, in attracting new members we need to use the information gained from this survey to target people who are looking for an association like ours, to join and of which to be a part. One of our greatest strengths is that we are an inclusive organisation. Twenty percent of our members model the Australian prototype and frankly, we don't really mind if they are not all Santa Fe modellers (*sorry, couldn't help myself*). So here is an opportunity to target other model railroad/railway enthusiasts. What we do need, to achieve this, is a specific marketing plan that is actively carried out (see my comments on being a volunteer organisation).

5. We need New Blood! (Or do we?)

There is an overwhelming opinion that we need to attract younger people. Well let us look at the facts. The majority of our members are between 40 and 100. As generous as we can be, that is not young. Furthermore, as covered in my Presidents Report this edition, there are significant reasons why we are not likely to attract young people. Despite any interest in model trains, there are too many competing activities diluting the available pool of potential NMRA members. What we do see is strong representation in the 40+ age bracket. Who are these people? Like you and me, they are married with children, the financial stress is not as bad as before; the kids are starting to look after themselves; they have available more discretionary money. Once again, they have the time to either take up, or resume a once-enjoyed hobby and they have the desire to expand their social links once again. If they have made the commitment to start or recommence a hobby, their level of expertise is not that high. So, what are they looking for? Exactly what we have to offer! I suggest that promoting the hobby to young people is something we already do well. By doing this, we are sowing seeds for the hobby with the hope that in a number of years this may germinate into something more positive. What we can do even better is target this other group who are actively interested in the hobby, and seek them as NMRA members.

6. The Cost of Membership!

No surprises here. Members are concerned about increasing costs. So too are we. In fact as you will have seen the BOD has been actively taking steps to reduce direct or on-costs. This aggressive fiscal responsibility approach will continue. But note, we face a number of challenges. We cannot control what the US does and we have no influence with the Australian dollar, despite the number of Holden cars we buy, or meat pies we eat! So, addressing these major cost issues directly is unlikely to do anything but reduce the revenue going directly to this region. We actually need to address this concern by another more innovative way. I have asked the BOD to specifically come up with a range of suggestions, no matter how different or unusual, in the hope

7. Bloody Computers!!!

Like it or not, computers have become an integral part of modern life. The majority of you have an Internet account and an e-mail address. Here lies an excellent opportunity to communicate better with our members. We could communicate more frequently and provide a higher level of member services. We already (thanks to Wayne Eagle) have an excellent web site and Wayne has given the BOD a view of the future opportunities available using web-based technology. The overwhelming response is that we need to formulate a plan to take advantage of this. One member actually suggested that we produce the Mainline electronically to save costs! Great thinking, but whatever we do, we need a plan that firstly does not disadvantage members who are not connected to the web, takes into account the great variety of computers (and age) and software programs in current use and which allows all members to actively interact with whatever solution we come up with. A special committee will be formed to examine these issues so that we know what we can do, what services we can offer, how much money will be saved and how non-computerised members can be included. Many country members thought this was a great idea, because distance prevents them from directly participating. The same could be said for members outside the three largest eastern seaboard cities as well.

8. Standards Live!!

Most of you also considered NMRA Standards to be a key reason for being a member. The extent of recognition and support was a surprise, but in truth, it should not be. "The Standards" provide clear guidance to modellers and manufacturers: DCC is a great example. There would not be a single DCC standard if it were not for the NMRA.

9. Mainline and Bulletin

Two strong attractions for membership are the Mainline and Bulletin magazines. Thanks to Keith McCarron the local content and presentation has been boosted to a point where it is the best regional magazine in the whole association. The Bulletin is also deserving of huge praise. It has gone from a fairly pedestrian magazine into a Model Railroader style content magazine. This is very welcome to existing and new members. The big issue for us is the cost of production. Small print-runs with commercial printers are expensive and the BOD is seeking more cost effective ways of producing the Mainline, with the same quality, but at less cost. (As we went to print, more information has arrived, please read my separate comments about the Mainline in this issue).

10. Two way communication

You suggested that the Board could communicate more frequently and better concerning issues related to the association. Well we have certainly been trying. The problem we now face is how much and how often. In addition, the Division Superintendents have a lot to say and personally, I think these types of report should not take up precious space in Mainline. Perhaps we can look at email or web-based communications here. The need is to clearly communicate both the issues and decisions to members so that they understand without being buried in detail. The other side of the coin is to provide members with an easy (again preferably electronic) means of communicating opinions back to the BOD and me. This is critical. If I don't know what you want, I can't help you. Remember, my ESP broke down and even though I have two degrees, neither of them is in mind reading. Help me out here, OK?

11. We are a Volunteer Association

Everything that gets done in this Association is the result of the efforts of volunteers. That means I can't fire them, but they can tell me to get [visit a taxidermist Ed.]. Please do two things for me and especially for yourself. If you can assist or support in some capacity, no matter how small, please do so. Secondly, when something happens that upsets you, please be patient. If you believe you could do better, please put your hand up. Remember, being an association of volunteers means we are dependent upon the efforts of a few and unlike your bank or insurance company, there is no customer service office to complain to. Too many people have unrealistic expectations about what they expect. Be understanding and appreciative.

12. Who does what?

Sometimes this question baffles even me. The association needs to document and circulate all its procedures and rulings so that there is no confusion about who is responsible for what and you, the members, know who to talk to first up and get the answers the first time! We are consequently embarking upon a major project to document and maintain roles, responsibilities and procedures so that we all have a single understanding, and just as importantly, we need to ensure that information is passed on from generation to generation (of board members at least).

We now have some real direction and a clear mandate from members to action the above issues. I look forward to communicating with you in the future to tell you of the progress being made and the achievements we have made. Most of all, please give me feedback. I can be called on 02 9838 8590 faxed on 02 9620 4499 or emailed on persol@mpx.com.au

Canberra June Continued from Page 5/...
Internet about our hobby, especially in the area of research about our favourite railroad. Many of them have historical societies and many have newsgroups. I have recently joined two concerning the Pennsy and been somewhat overwhelmed by the incredible level of detail that can be found in these groups, rivet counters all if that is your thing!

Then it was on to the new layout room where we found the second Elk Run under construction. Peter told us about the plan and how it would all come together and we could not but believe him. His progress with the layout shamed some us into promising more action in future on our own layouts, I in particular. There was one problem noted by Peter and that was the preferred short name of his layout, E II R, for which a family business in the UK had already claimed the rights! Finally, the snacks came out, together with a glass of champagne all round to celebrate Peter'sth birthday.***

Melbourne

by Grant M^cAdam
March Meeting

The March meeting saw the members of Division 3 travelling to Graham Meyer's at Emerald which is also the home of the famous Puffing Billy Railway. The meeting was well attended by fourteen members and sons. Members are encouraged to bring responsible rail minded off-spring to meetings to encourage them to take up the hobby. It was one of our usual lunch time meetings which have now become the norm. Considering the distances some of member's travel to get to a meeting it is more worthwhile to make it a days outing rather than just an afternoon function. Graham Meyer our host ensured that no one left hungry with an assortment of salads to accompany the members supplied meat (for the barbecue) and an array of sweets for afternoon tea. The

afternoon was taken up with examining the items brought along for display. Gavin Hince brought along O and HO scale water tanks and a G scale structure for his garden layout that started life as a bird feeder. O scale display items are becoming more common with Laurie Green displaying his engine shed with a detailed interior with some of the tools coming from a G scale tool set and Steve Cullen had a scratch-built open wagon. The narrow gauge theme was continued by John Dennis who brought along the books *Twenty Four Inches Apart* by S.M. Moir and *Exotic Indian Mountain Railways* by R.R. Bhandari; Grant M^cAdam had the latest copy of *Narrow Gauge Downunder*, photographs of Chamatiago & Southern and some G scale figures that he has been painting for a member of AMRA; and finally Bob Backway had copies of the plans for the Walhalla station which was part of the Victorian Narrow Gauge Railway system.

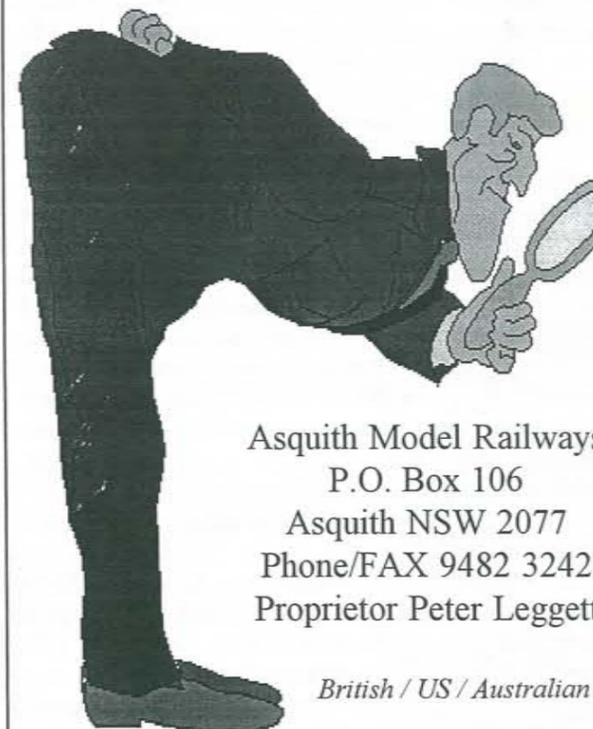
Continued Page 24/...

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2-6-4 Tank loco BR Lion in black. Duchess of Montrose in original box with tender BR Green, 1 D1 footbridge unused original box, Single track tunnel boxed and unused, 15 volt power unit, 1 red Royal Mail, box. Boxed and unused wagons 2 4 wheel tanks, box van, Chlorine Tankhorse Box, Ventilated Van, Saxa Salt Wagon, Sand Wagon (United Glass), 16 ton Mineral Wagon, Long Wheel base Ventilated Van, 2 Good Brake Vans, 5 Assorted boxed mint bogie coaches, Operating Mail Coach and lineside Catcher, Unused Breakdown Crane, 2 signals Assorted 3 rail track and points etc. suite collector.
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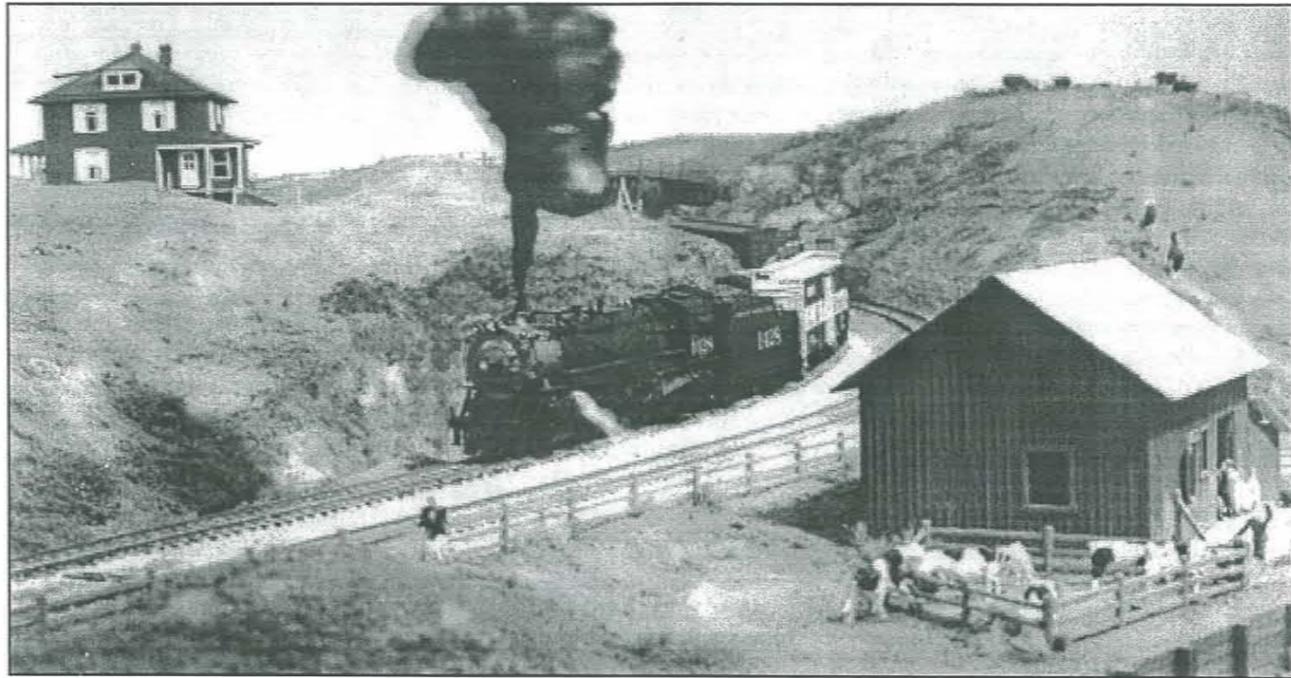
PO Box 126, Marayong NSW 2148

or call

tel: 02 9624 8779 or fax: 02 9838 9935

or email: DUV@hawknet.com.au

Rod Smith's Missouri Pacific Railroad



The venue for the April 2000 NMRA meeting in Sydney was the layout of long-time member, Rodney Smith. Many people commented on Rod's purpose-designed building in his back garden in which houses his Topeka Valley Division of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. To find out more about this hidden gem, Gary Norwood spoke with Rod, while Dieter Chidel took photographs of just a few of the views on this vast layout.

A railfanning conversation between Gary Norwood and Rod Smith on his Missouri and Topeka Valley Division layout.

Rod, during the April NMRA meeting, several people were surprised to see this large layout that was virtually unknown. Most people were keen to know more about your layout and this may be the best way to answer most of their questions. I would like to start by getting some background about your layout.

What inspired you to model the Missouri Pacific and the area depicted?

The Division is a freelance portion of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and is based on the mainline between Kansas City and Omaha, which the Mopac shared with the Union Pacific Railroad.

The layout depicts an era of the late

40s to early 50s. I run mostly Mopac equipment with a smattering of UP. I like the motive power of that era, because it lets me have a good mix of steam and first generation diesels.

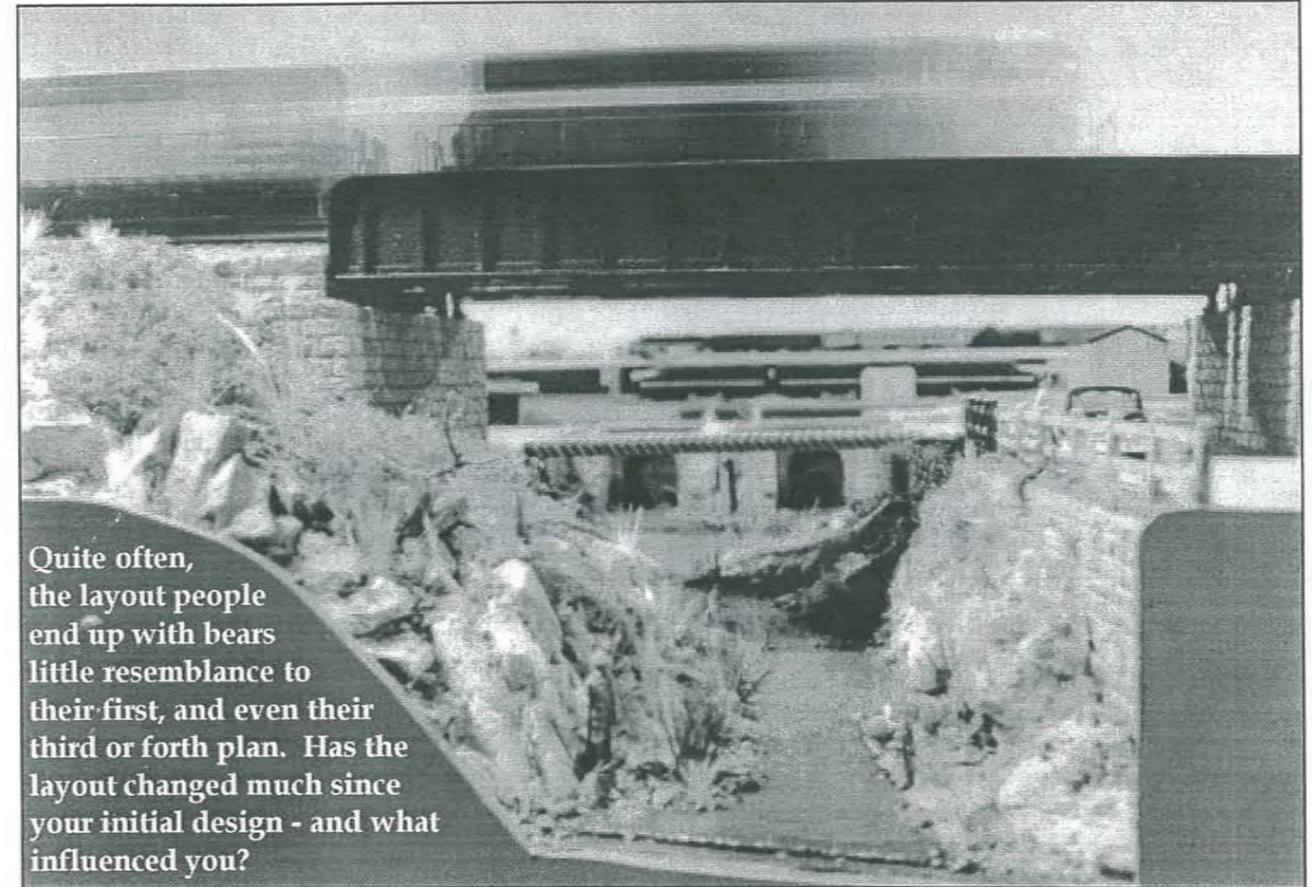
Is this your first layout?

This is my third layout. My first layout was just a circle of track with one siding on a board. The second layout was located in my garage and underwent two rebuilds. I finished a lot of the scenery on that one and, in fact, the town area of the current layout came from the layout in the garage.

When did you start working on this layout?

The freestanding layout building was completed in late 1991. Layout construction was started in 1992 and is still progressing.

The original plans called for an 'E' shaped design. Utilising the desired



Quite often, the layout people end up with bears little resemblance to their first, and even their third or fourth plan. Has the layout changed much since your initial design - and what influenced you?

radius necessary for certain brass locos to run would have meant one "S" bend after another with curves in between. Foremost on the wish list was watching trains run. To make the most of the area available I settled on a double track mainline in a figure 8 bent over on itself with the top loop situated on a large peninsular. This gave me the reasonably long runs that I was after, while giving the locos a good chance of negotiating the curves without any trouble.

What type of construction is used for the framework?

I decided to use the traditional 'L' girder type construction for the framework, with ply (of various thicknesses) for the sub-roadbed. I find that the L girder is light, yet very strong, especially if you plan to use plaster for constructing scenery. All of the track is commercial flex-track and I have laid it on homasote, and in some areas, cork roadbed.

What are the dimensions of the room and the layout?

The building is 16' x 32' (4.8m x

9.6 m) and the layout utilises approximately 15' x 25' of the area.

The scenery looks very good, what can you tell us about it?

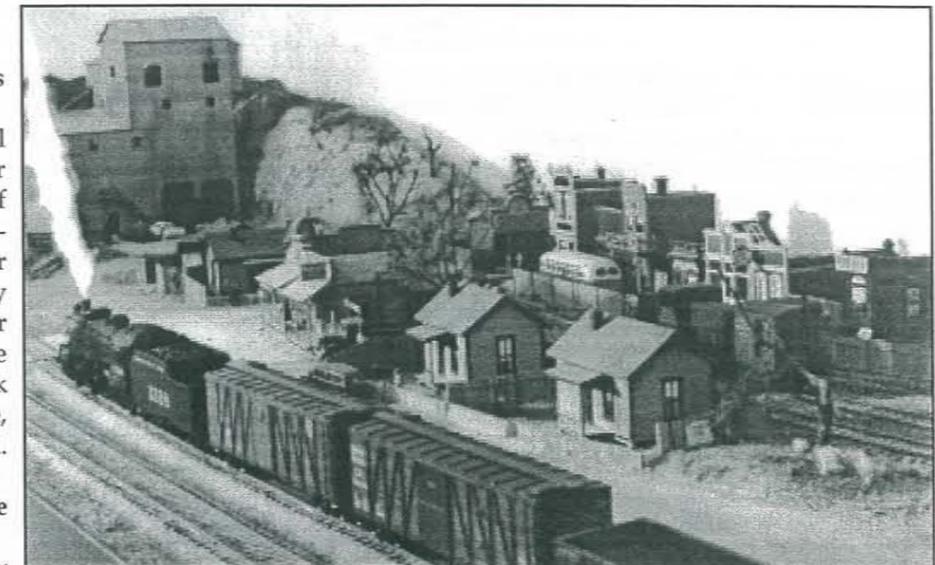
Scenery is casting plaster over bird cage wire. The few rocks that are on the layout are a mixture of real rocks and plaster castings.

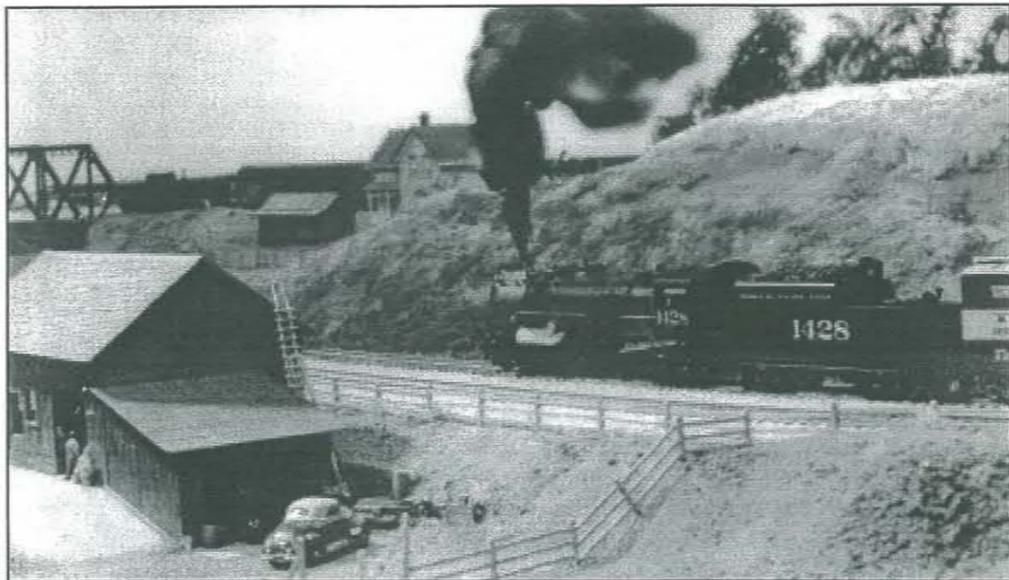
Natural dirt, well sifted, is augmented with Woodland Scenic products. A fair proportion of the

non-residential scenery has been detailed by Geoff Nott, who is also responsible for scratch building two wonderful buildings.

Are the structures based on actual buildings or freelance?

One or two are based on actual prototype structures; the remainder are freelance. I wanted structures that would support more than just a freight car or two, so the ones I select





tend to be more complex. If I find a prototype building that suits the purpose, then I might use it. Otherwise, I just take the parts of various building that interest me and combine them to result in an interesting, but operable, industry.

Do you have any operating sessions?

When I had the layout in the garage, I held operating sessions with a round-robin group I belonged to and another group used to come for the occasional running night. I am currently having running sessions, but I plan to once again have operating sessions - eventually.

Are there any special features on your layout?

Yes. I can have night-time running sessions under 'night lighting.' I have installed blue incandescent light globes in the ceiling, on a separate circuit. Sunset, or sunrise can be simulated using an orange/red globe that is mounted in an old reading lamp. This is mounted low and at the rear of the scenery. It shines up behind the scenery and gives a very realistic looking sunset glow to the sky backdrop behind the layout.

The industries look very interesting. What was the reasoning behind the industries you selected?

As I said at the start, the basic requirement was to watch trains run, rather than spend a lot of time fiddling in the yard, so I decided to have fewer industries, but with those I did select to be mostly on the larger size. To date, I have completed the rock crusher, which has a 12 car siding, and the grain silos, which

have a nine car siding. Industries and buildings still under construction and yet to be completed include:

The Foundry	4 cars
A Brewery	3 cars
An Oil/Fuel depot	4 cars
A Cannery	4 cars
A Cement plant	3 cars

What future developments are planned?

Well, I want to finish the industrial area, then I plan to begin constructing a large town. By the way, if anybody reading this would like to put together a building, or two they are welcome to "apply within." I also want to build a small branch line that runs alongside a river. This should make a good screen to hide the eight-track staging area. Finally, I do not intend to start over or remake any areas on the layout. When it's down, it's in for good. What you see is what you get. I'm for running trains, thanks.

Presidents Award

The new look Mainline is the direct result of the efforts of it's Editor, Keith McCarron. It is by far the best looking Regional Journal in the entire NMRA and has provided a visual feast in terms of it's articles and picture reproduction.

Now Keith has gone one step further. As of this edition of *MainLine*, you will notice a different paper and print process. Knowing the BOD's concern about the cost of the Mainline, (each edition costs about \$1,000 to print) Keith sought an alternative way to produce the magazine, and with the help of Dieter Chidel, who found a high resolution, direct computer-to-printer copying process, we are now able to maintain quality and almost halve the cost. But it gets better than that. The old printing process required us to buy a print run, and irrespective of how many we actually needed, we had to take the whole batch. Now we can order and pay for exactly the number we need to print.

This is a significant achievement on Keith's part. Not only has the standard set for print production been upheld, but also introduction of this new process has made a major contribution to reducing production costs. It therefore gives me great pleasure to award Keith a President's Award for his outstanding and continuing contribution to the Association. Congratulations Keith and thank you from all of us.

Geoff Hoad
President
Australasian Region

Union Pacific Model Railroad Co.

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TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES TREES

Following very favourable comments about the quality of our trees during our first exhibition over Easter, we have decided to mass produce the Spruce and Cedar trees and offer them for sale at a very affordable price! Some conditions will apply namely:



- * Minimum Order of one (1) box of 100 mixed L + M + S @ \$150.00 + Postage
 - * Trees are made to order! Orders will take some time to process, patience required!
- Check our website for further details or, phone **Stuart Hall on 0412 237 820** evenings!



EXHIBITION UPDATE EXHIBITION UPDATE

Owing to the extreme difficulties in assembling and disassembling the huge UPMRR layout, further plans to stage additional exhibitions have been deferred until we can locate an affordable venue that can provide us with very large door access!

PERMANENT SITE PERMANENT SITE PERMANENT SITE

Any plans for the UPMRR to settle into a permanent site will necessitate the inclusion of other model railroaders to help create some atmosphere. Modular groups should find some real advantages in a permanent set up! No frustrating and time consuming efforts in assembling, more time for operations

The UPMRR would welcome expressions of interest from anyone, be they individuals or Clubs, having exhibition type model railroads of any scale, to display permanently!

In designing the UPMRR, provision was made for a future extension. It was envisaged that this extension would be modular in construction, consist mainly of single track, with passing sidings, and be run over a considerable length. In light of the fact that a commercial building large enough to house the UPMRR and additional attractions will be expensive to lease, now may be an opportune time to think seriously about the setting up of an NScale DCC Modular Club!

Any Model Railroaders who feel they may like to become involved in such a large-scale operation are invited to contact Stuart Hall and register their genuine interest.

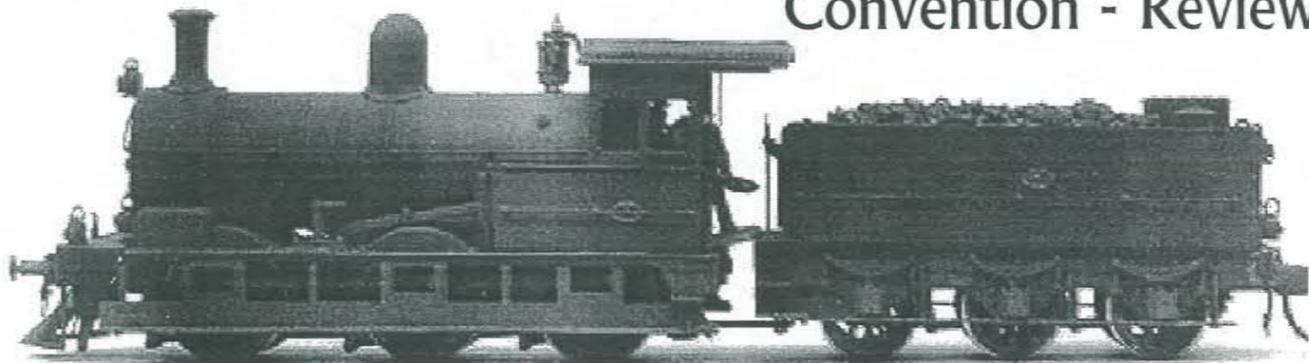
If sufficient numbers of interested parties come forward, we will take it the next step and put forward a detailed proposal of our plans. Phone evenings on 9744-8957, mail us at P.O. Box 213 Gladesville NSW 2111 or preferably, email through our website!

www.upmodelrr.com.au



Melbourne 2000

Convention - Review



Model Competition - Locomotives 1st Place Peter MacDonald for his HO scale VR Y class locomotive

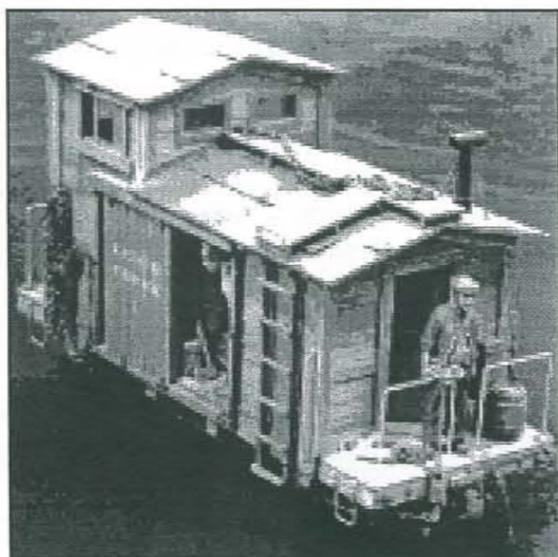
The NMRA convention was held at the Bayside Secondary College close to the centre of Melbourne on Saturday 20 May. The college could easily be reached by public transport. The college was ideally suited for the convention with the clinic rooms being close to the main hall and competition areas. It had the advantage of being entirely undercover in case the weather was a little inclement.

Presentations

The organising committee arranged for eleven presentations by people known for their talents in a particular facet of the hobby and they were given in three streams over the day. As there were only seven time slots, attendees had to make a decision as to which clinics they would attend. Many of the clinics were practical demonstrations of the techniques being described and the three streams helped to keep numbers down so everyone had a good view of the presentation. Division 3 members gave all but three of the presentations and considering the size of the Division (about 35 members) this was a very good effort. The topics included:

- Light-Weight Framing An Alternative to Timber *Mario Rapinett*
- Soft Rocks, Alternative Scenery Techniques and Materials *Mark Fry*
- Amongst the Tall Timbers

- Scenery Techniques *Geoff Nott*
 - Soldering White Metal and Brass Kits *Peter MacDonald*
 - Styrene Kit Construction *Paul Richie*
 - Realistic Weathering *Laurie Green*
 - HO "Magnetic Knuckle Coupler" Clinic *Graeme Nitz*
 - Operating The N Gauge Experience *John Beaton*
 - Why Change to Digital Command Control? *Gerry Hopkins*
 - Resistance Soldering *Ian Mitaxa*
 - Electronic Project Construction or Keeping the Smoke In! *Bob Backway*
- The theme for this year's convention was "You've studied the prototype - now it's time to build the model." The programme was devised to encourage the participants to get to the workbench and start modelling. All the techniques displayed were simple and straightforward and I hope they dispelled the myths and



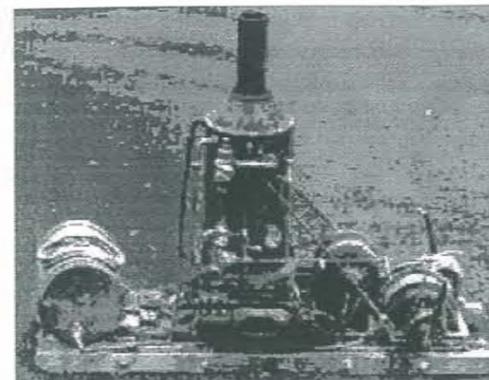
Best in Show Geoff Nott O scale Caboose

fears that many people have when starting a modelling project. I for one learnt new techniques and re-learned some old ones that I plan to apply in my modelling. The convention notes that every participant received were very capably edited by Bob Backway and compiled into a book that ran to sixty-four pages.

In the main hall were the layouts, trade stands and continuous tea and coffee. Toni Saxon also had the NMRA membership stand set-up and had many inquiries throughout the day. Several attendees, who had let their membership lapse, took the opportunity to rejoin the association. Toni also signed up several new members during the day. I look forward to meeting many of these members at our monthly meeting.

Layouts

Carlisle River is an On30 scale freelance layout based on Victorian Narrow Gauge practices by Steve Holian. Steve Cullen capably assisted Steve in the layout's construction. Both men are members of the NMRA and the Sunbury Model Railway Club (SMRC). The layout can be incorporated into a much larger modular system designed by the SMRC. The purpose of the modular layout is to give the members an opportunity to try their hand at O scale narrow gauge modelling without committing themselves to an entire layout. Steve was available to answer questions



about the layout throughout the day and many of the convention participants had a go at switching the layout.

The *Enterprise Gold Mining Company* is a freelance On30 scale layout under construction by Laurie Green. With the advent of the Bachmann On30 Porter, and with many of his operators owning On30 stock, Laurie was convinced to build this layout in On30 gauge, rather than his usual gauge of On3. Laurie made extensive use of computer-aided design during the planning of the layout, from the framing through to the structures, and the entire layout is designed to fit in the back of his Toyota Celica when travelling to exhibitions. This layout was displayed under construction to demonstrate the techniques that Laurie uses during construction and he has taken a leaf from Geoff Nott's book and made limited use of real rock. The limited size of the baseboards has ensured that even with the use of real rocks, they have not become too heavy to move.

Leopold is a small HO scale layout based on a typical Victorian Railways branch line station by the SMRC. The layout was built nearly twenty years ago and has undergone three facelifts over the years. It is a fine example to show that if a layout is properly designed and built, it can last for many years, even on the exhibition circuit. The compact size of the layout makes it ideally suited to fitting into a spare room and shows what can be achieved in a small space.

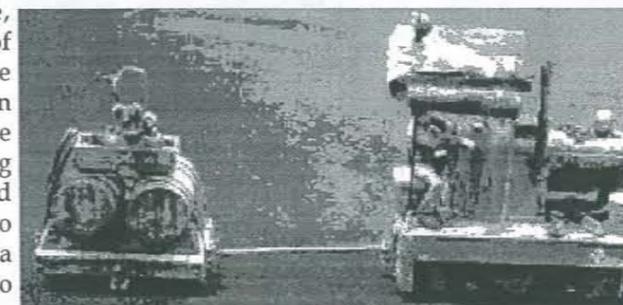
Traders

The traders at this convention included Geoff Truman from the

Werribee Hobby Centre and the Victorian Hobby Centre. Powerline also had a stand displaying the range of locomotives and rolling stock that they produce.

As part of the convention registration fee, lunch was included in the price and it was a fine array of finger food. There was continuous tea and coffee during the day and soft drinks were available at a nominal cost.

There was an optional convention dinner held on the Saturday evening that took the form of a roving roast. After the dinner, Grant M'Adam took the opportunity to thank the presenters, layout owners and by no means least, the attendees, for without their support the convention would not have been



held. There were numerous interstate visitors with about a dozen from New South Wales and three people from Western Australia and the remainder from Victoria (40). The presenters are to be congratulated for the quality of their presentations. They all gave freely of their limited time to prepare the presentation material and accompanying notes.

The competition results were announced (see later for results) after dinner and then Grant introduced Gerry Hopkins to give the after dinner presentation. Gerry gave a very entertaining presentation on the characters that he has met during twenty years on the exhibition circuit.

The convention ran very smoothly throughout the day with no problems arising. All the comments I have received about the convention have been very

positive. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the rest of the organising committee (Laurie Green, Bob Backway, Peter MacDonald and Mario Rapinett) for their support, and the members of Division 3 for their input during the planning stages and help on the day.

Contest Results

The Modelling Competition run in conjunction with this year's convention was a little different from those in the past. It was decided to run an open modelling competition that was judged according to the NMRA rules. As the models are judged individually on the quality of the workmanship, finish and conformity it would give non-NMRA members an idea of how their modelling rated on the NMRA scale. As this was an open modelling competition the number of categories were reduced. Despite

the limited number of entries, the quality of modelling was generally very high and only the first and second place getters were announced.

Locomotives

- 1st Peter MacDonald HO scale VR Y class
- 2nd Mark Fry O scale Mining Tractor.

Passenger Cars

- 1st Peter MacDonald HO scale VR BW
- 2nd Michael Greenhill HO scale VR BE

Rolling Stock

- 1st Geoff Nott O scale Caboose
- 2nd Geoff Nott O scale Log Car

Structures

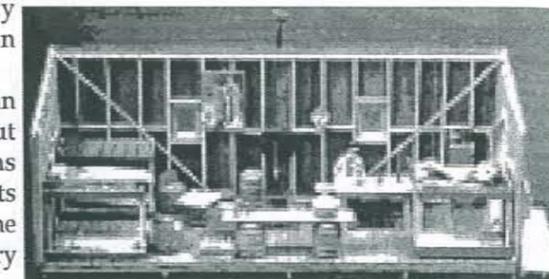
- 1st Paul Richie S scale Bunk House
- 2nd Mark Fry HO scale Donkey Engine

Modules

- 1st Mario Rapinett O scale Eagle Rock Gully

Best in Show

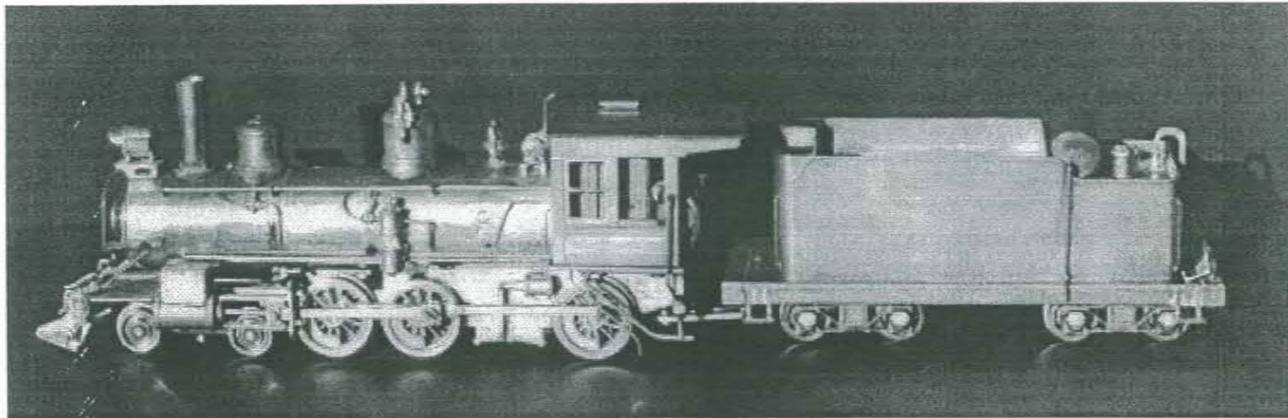
- Geoff Nott O scale Caboose



FEATURE SERIES Brass Locos

Getting Them to Run

By Martin Boyask



A 4-6-0 HO3 Brass Loco - out of the box & ready for fine tuning - Photo by Dieter Chidel

Part 3. Building the Mechanism (first buy your Prozac)

I suggested in Part 1 that brass HO locomotives follow a surprisingly similar form of construction. In this part, I will try to describe this rebuild as though our mythical engine was of the most boringly standard type. However, where I remember, I will try to add in some of the variations.

Each assembly note will follow the same pattern - check the item for defects, correct them, clean up, and where appropriate paint it. Then add it to the main assembly.

The main frame. Inspect the bare chassis for poor solder joints, and for any obvious misalignment, such as twisting. Place it on a dead flat surface such as a piece of glass, and see if the bottom edges sit square and level. Check any screw holes for stripped threads. This is uncommon, but it might be necessary to re-tap to a slightly bigger size.

Check especially around the rear end where the motor secures and the cab will bolt on. Make sure the cab fixing plate across the end is secure and horizontal. A few locos have the cab screws inserted vertically from underneath, but

most go in horizontally through the cab's lower rear skirt.

Check carefully where the dummy springs are soldered to the top edges of the main frames - a common breakage here. For big chassis joints, you will need a heavy duty soldering set-up, ideally a big Weller gun (160 watts) or even an induction soldering kit if you are lucky! Clean all such areas thoroughly and use plenty of flux. Then clean again and take the trouble to remove surplus solder from the joints.

When the main chassis is ready, check out the cylinder block, mainly for secure slide bars, where fitted to the cylinders. If any slide bars have become detached or loose, carefully re-solder them, then clean up around the joint.

At this point, it is worth painting the chassis, keeper plate and cylinders. If using model paints, a light primer followed by either engine or grimy/weathered black works well, but I use an Autosmart car aerosol satin black as both primer and top coat (well, nearly top coat,

as the whole loco is usually dulled and weathered later.) I then bake the paint lightly in a medium hot oven for about 20 minutes. When dry, clean the paint out of the driver cutouts so that the bearings will make good contact. Also, clean paint from around any keeper plate hole where a truck securing screw will go.

Now the first real assembly can take place. I feel it is important to realise that fitting and testing the drivers is the most critical aspect of assembly. If the driver set, fitted just with the coupling rods, does not spin freely in the chassis, no amount of tinkering with other parts will produce a good runner. So the sequence I use is to fit the driver pairs, one at a time, checking the insulated wheel is on the fireman's side, and the spring is carefully seated.

Check the drivers by spinning them, to see they are squarely on the axle. Check also the back-to-back gauge and that no driver is loose on its axle, which will allow it to go in and out of quartering - mostly out.

It is not a bad idea to check with a

circuit tester that the insulated driver really is, and that the current collecting wheel is passing current to its axle. There is not usually a problem here, but old age can cause odd faults to show up, as in people, and this is the easiest time to pinpoint the trouble.

Another check to make is that the main driver crankpins are tight and fitted squarely.

Make sure you understand how the bearings fit - some are round but with a 'flat' ground at one point. The flat fits against the keeper plate. Some are rectangular. All have at least one side flanged, to set against the frame. Most have a shallow dimple on the upper side to take the lower end of the coil spring. Some later types of bearings, in particularly good models, are extended vertically to accommodate a hole for the spring, instead of the dimple. These use a longer, softer coil spring, which really works properly.

With the rare type that has a single spring wire each side instead of coils, this is a fitted "over and

under" small-flanged boss inside the frames. The extreme front and rear ends of the spring wires project out across the frame cross-members, sometimes in fine grooves, and are retained there when the keeper plate is fitted. However, the keeper plate does not "trap" the wires - they should be free to move. The driver bearings with this set-up are usually round, and without the flat lower surface more commonly found.

(See sketch Part 1).

When fitted, the wire crosses each driver bearing cutout in the main frame, about 3/4 of the way up each opening, so that when each driver set is fitted, its bearings push up lightly against the wire springs.

With all drivers fitted, secure the keeper plate and stand the assembly on some flat track. This is where you really get to see what the drivers are doing. Yes, the weight of the rest of the loco will depress the chassis a little on the springs, but not much. It is a good idea to sit a suitable lump of lead or other weight

on top of the chassis to simulate the loco weight somewhat. In this bare state, all the drivers should be comfortably in rail contact. At the very least, the leading and trailing drivers should be in best contact. If the centre drivers make most contact, it will appear possible to "rock" the chassis around the centre wheels, so making the outer drivers come off the rails. If this happens, either the bottom edges of the frames are not truly flat, so the keeper plate is curving slightly upward at each end, or the outer springs are too weak or too short, compared with the inner springs.

Improvements:

1) Take the drivers back out of the chassis and true-up the bottom edges of the frames on a large flat file, or

2) Make thin brass shim spacers to fit between the front and rear cross-members and the keeper plate.

If springs are suspected as the fault, try swapping their relative positions in the chassis, or simply clip

Continued on Page... 18/

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Continued from Page... 19/.

spring holds the halves closed around the pin.

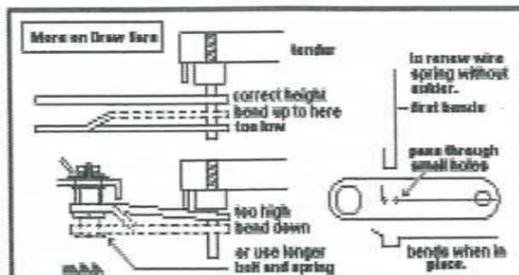
Check the insulation bush and washer for breakages. In addition, check the solder joint between the draw bar and its spring - very common failure point this. Also, check the soldering of the motor wire to the solder tag, replacing the whole wire if necessary. It is often a set of very close clearances around the draw bar fixing. Care is needed to see that the wire and solder tag cannot touch any metalwork. In addition, the draw bar itself must not touch the chassis or cab metal during its normal swing. A couple of small points often make a big improvement.

a) Check that the bush does not protrude above the surface of the metal chassis part in which it is fitted - trim it flush if it does.

b) Sometimes it is good to replace the fibre washer with a thin fibre or plastic plate covering more of the chassis deck surface. The bush and the washer, or plastic plate, can be glued in position once checked. They do not need to be removable and the

draw bar assembly job is far easier if they are secured. When set, fit the draw bar on the shouldered bolt, spring wire uppermost, then the coil spring. Pass the bolt through the bush and fibre washer, add the solder tag and fit the screw. Tighten up fully and check the position of the solder tag is not likely to short anything.

Some solder tags (PFM especially) are thicker brass and are tapped to take the bolt. These do not use the 2mm nut. Some old locos have much cruder assemblies, more like nuts and bolts. Some old draw bars do not carry current at all - a wire crosses the gap to the tender and fixes on there in some way. If you have suitable spares, it is worth scrapping all these odds and ends, and converting the loco to the modern system.



As mentioned earlier, check that the draw bar meets the tender pin roughly half way up. Sometimes it is necessary to use a longer pin to reach a low draw bar, if the draw bar cannot be gently bent up to the right position.

If the draw bar is too high it can either be bent down as shown, or a longer shouldered screw used to secure it. Rarely, in really poor designs, I have found it useful to simply make a new draw bar out of thin brass, using stainless steel wire for the spring. The latter will not solder by normal means, but can be inserted in two very small holes to produce the same effect - see sketches.

So - we now have a X-coupled mechanism with motor, gearbox and drawgear, but nothing else. However, it is perfectly track testable if you have a working tender. Sit the mechanism on the track, place a suitable chunk of weight on the chassis (spaced away from the drivers of course) and connect a tender that is known to work OK. Remember we should still have our bits of tubing on the main

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Why Did I Change to DCC?

by Gerry Hopkins MMR

There were a number of reasons that finally convinced me to change to DCC.

1. I'm Lazy.
2. RSI - turning rotary switches for each block.
3. Much easier to wire - 2 wires for the track, co-ax for the throttles.
4. Memory walk around - I sometimes forget where I am!
5. Consisting - more than one loco per train, combine any brand and type of loco.
6. Lighting effects
7. Sound effects
8. Drive the train not the layout.

Control Panels

On conventional layouts (the old DC layouts) it was normal to put a control panel at each major yard or have a master panel at one location. There was a lot of work designing and building a panel, it's time consuming and you never get it right first go. Never mind the cost of those rotary switches and LED's and wiring. The DCC layout does not need a panel. The turnout switches, if used, are normally located close to the turnout - a minimum of wiring, no dedicated panel.

Wiring

Wiring a basic layout is very simple you only require 2 wires. The size of the wire will depend on the size of the layout but a starting point would be heavy-duty twin flex. Places like Dick Smith (W2025) and Jaycar (WH3078) sell a red/black heavy twin flex that can be used for the power bus (It's a 17 amp cable). They also sell a smaller twin flex that can be used for the connection between the rail and the flex. Use a connection for each section of rail.

Memory Walk Around

You are no longer tied to a panel. This means you can walk with the train and observe signals and turnouts as you go. When the train is moving, it will hold its speed and direction until you plug the throttle in and give it a new command. You drive the train not the layout.

Consisting

This will be a new term to many modellers; the usual term is double or triple heading. On DC you have to select similar locos to do this properly. On DCC any locos can be used, when they are first set up they can be told their top speed and momentum settings; the Command station does the rest. Locos can be added to or removed from the consist at any time. Mid and rear train helpers can be added to the consist or be driven separately.

Lighting Effects

Numerous lighting effects can be controlled from the throttle. Constant brightness is the big plus. The headlight can be turned on or off, can be directional or switchable. Another option is Rule 17 where the headlight is dimmed when approaching another train or station. Special effects include Mars Light, Flashing Beacon, Ditch lights and cab lights. All these can be activated from the throttle.

Sound Effects

There are numerous sound modules available, normal, articulated, geared steam locos; Alco and EMD diesels with different horns. The different sounds can be activated from the throttle as required. When the sound is set at a scale level, the effect is awesome. Difficult so far?

Walk

Debunking the Myths Cost.

A basic system with 2 throttles starts at \$350AUS. Decoders start from \$25.00AUS and power cable from \$1.00AUS per meter. The average DC layout would have 10 - 20 block switches, @ \$5 + \$1 for rotary and knob that's \$60 - \$120 dollars plus all the extra wiring and panel material. Good throttles cost around \$80 each. We are already up to \$280 for a small layout.

Operator Knowledge

You do **not** require an astro-pilot licence, just key in the number of your loco and start driving. It is quicker to learn how to drive a DCC layout than it is with a blocked DC layout. Programming is dealt with later. The choice of knob or buttons is up to you - which ever makes you comfortable.

Decoders.

Decoders are the little bits that look like a dressed up cockroach that fits into your locos.

Due to the implementation of the NMRA DCC Standards all decoders work with all brands of command station for all basic functions. Most of the variations are in the decoders. The cost of the decoder depends on whether or not you can solder. You can pay an extra \$10 - \$25 for a plug and pray decoder.

What's in a decoder? Magic smoke, if you let the smoke out, they don't work!

Programming Decoders

The basic decoder (basic = lowest cost, limited functions) has CV's (Configuration Variables = things you can change) as follows:

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CV1 = a number between 01 and 99. This is the number of the loco.
 CV2 = motor start voltage, so that you are not waiting half your life for the loco to move.
 CV3 = acceleration
 CV4 = deceleration
 (CV17 & CV18 if using 4 digits)

Functions normally are front and rear lights, all others are extras for your choice. All decoders will work on all systems (thanks NMRA) although some advanced features are limited to particular decoders.

There are many more CV's but the ones above are all that most people need, and then only once. Once the information is programmed into the decoder it stays there until you change it. The only other item that requires set up are the speed steps, these are 14/28 or 128 but this will depend on the system you use AND the decoder you use. Remember that the full size diesel only has 7/8 speed notches.

Out of the box, the decoder is programmed for address #03, connect it to a simple tester before mounting it in the loco.

Once you have run the loco, move it to a section of track that is separate to the rest of the system. This is used for programming your locos. Set the CV1 first and then run your loco for a while until you know how you want it to operate. The use of 2 or 4 digits for your loco number depends on the system you use. The "experts" will tell you that you need to change all the other settings but CV1 is the only one you need to get you going - the rest can wait.

The Systems

The next decision is the brand of system. There are many (listed at the end of these notes) to choose from. The major brands used in Australia are EasyDCC, System One/NCE, Lenz, Digitrax. Asking each of the suppliers or, for that matter, each existing user which is the better system is like going to the Bathurst 1000 and asking the crowd which is the better car Ford or Holden.

All systems have a command station (the main control unit) and a booster (this adds the control signal to the power and feeds them

to the track). The only other part needed is the throttle. Again, this comes down to the Ford/Holden choice. The controller can plug into the command station or into simple sockets around the layout. When you are driving a train, you can unplug and move to the next socket without effecting the motion of the train.

All controllers have an emergency stop that will stop all trains on the system, the controller that stops the system is also the only controller that can restart the system.

The basic rules to follow are: always stop a train before you de-select and select a different one, and always stop a train before you de-select and select a different one,

There is a "forward/reverse" button on the controller (also known as "direction") this refers to the direction of travel of the loco not the direction along the track. With DC, when you put the switch to the right the loco moves to the right, if you picked it up and turned it around it would still move to the right. With DCC "forward" means go in the direction of the front of the loco. Not sure which is the front? Diesels have a small "F" at the front end and steam locos have a tender behind! If you pick the loco up and turn it around it will still go where the front is pointing.

Driving The Train NOT The Layout

When operating a layout with DCC you spend most of the time driving locos not selecting block switches. When you have had enough practice you can start reprogramming some locos, change the top speed (my HOn30 locos have a maximum of about 40mph, but the standard gauge locos on the modules have a top speed of 70mph). Setting the acceleration and deceleration (inertia in the old terms) can give some interest to operations, besides, if you press the reverse direction button while the loco is doing 40mph, it will slow down - stop - reverse its lights and then accelerate in the opposite direction.

All the above applies to all systems: which one you like is up to

you. Your choice of Ford/Holden/Toyota/Volvo. The decoders start at \$25 and if you have sound, they can start from \$180.

Get invited to an operating session on someone's layout and see some of the different systems in operation. If you are about to start building your layout think strongly about DCC before you buy all those block switches and all that wire.

Remember; when invited to operate, or view someone's layout:-

- Do NOT lean on the layout.
- Do NOT put your drinks on the layout.
- Do NOT handle the locos/rolling unless requested by the owner.
- Do NOT corner the host and tell him about YOUR layout.
- Do NOT corner the host and tell him/her they should have done it another way.
- Do NOT distract other operators with idle chatter during an operating session; they may not be as proficient as you.
- Do ask before taking video or photos, especially at an operating session.
- Don't let the "educated" expert put you off; try it for yourself, and only accept advice from someone who owns a DCC system.

Happy Modelling

Gerry Hopkins MMR

FOR SALE On30 NA

Mint brass (some light tarnish) model of Victorian Railways Baldwin built 2-6-2 tank locomotive. Built by Ajin, Korea and imported by Australian Locomotive Company, Melbourne some years back. Many features such as opening smokebox front, doors, removable lamps, etc. Original box and wrapping. Test run only. Asking \$1,650 including shipping. Contact John Saxon on 02 4369 7453 or email jsaxon@tac.com.au

DCC Web Sites

Command Stations & Decoders:

Arnold	www.arnold-digital.de
Digitrax	www.digitrax.com
Dynatrol PSI	
Easy DCC	www.cvpusa.com
Lenz	www.lenz.com
LGB	www.lgb.com
MRC	www.modelrec.com
North Coast Engineering	www.tttrains.com/northcoast
Train Control Systems	tcs@ot.com
Trix	www.trix.nl
Umelec Ing Buero	www.netwings.ch/umelec
Wangrow (System One)	www.wangrow.com
ZIMO ELEKTRONIC	www.zimo.at
ZTC	ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ztc

Sound:

Soundtrax	www.soundtraxx.com
ThrottleUp!	www.tttrains.com/throttleup

Accessories:

Loys Toys	www.loystoys.com
Rock Junction Controls	www.rockjunction.com

Many DCC sites may be accessed via

Australian DCC	http://
adcc.webjump.com	
Tried and True Trains	http://www.tttrains.com
Tony's Train Exchange	http://www.ttx-dcc.com

Making Brass Run

Continued from Page... 20/.

crank pins to keep the rods aligned.

Run some power to the track and trundle the nude mechanism around. If the weight is reasonably stable, you should be able to operate this "engine" anywhere.

At this point, we will close our toolbox for a while. In the next issue we'll look at completing the mechanism and adding the fiddly bits. 

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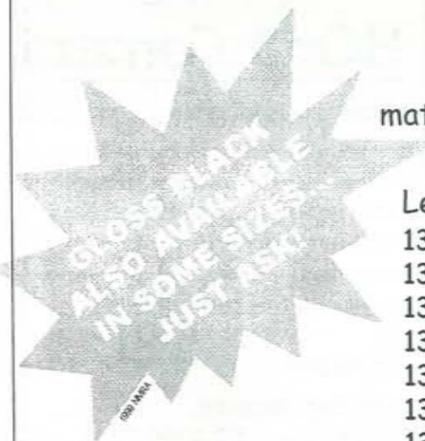
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Victorian Region

Continued from Page 9/...

Grant McAdam gave a brief report on the planning for the convention to be held in May with most of the details resolved it promises to be great event.

The afternoon was rounded out by Laurie Green giving a demonstration on how to make wire wound pine trees. Laurie slips a fold piece of wire over the end of a nail and then places the string between the wire and uses hot glue to hold it in place. The advantage of using the hot glue is that it allows the branches of the trees to be cut to shape before being twisted. After twisting using a drill the tree is sprayed with paint and the flock/foam is then added. It was suggested that brown No More Gaps could be used in place of the hot glue as it would give more bulk to the trunk and is already pre-coloured. Grant McAdam brought along some examples of trees made from natural armatures and some experiments of wire twisted trees from fine florist wire. He also had some flower heads from nandina (Japanese bamboo) which has a natural generic tree shape and examples of the etched foliage from the Scale Link range. Graham Meyer pruned some flower heads from his Pride of Madeira, which makes

through Ken and Pam Morecroft. Ken has taken the lead in re-vitalising the scenery on the HO layout. Ken explained the plans for sections of the layout and wanted feed-back and advice from the members present. Ken picked up some good ideas and has recently told me that some of the changes are already taking place. They need to be finished before the Christmas party circuit starts. Many local group's use the facilities for their Christmas functions and it is great opportunity to show case the talents of the Society who provides rides on the miniature railway and run the HO layout through out the day.

Pam has more interest in the miniature outdoor railway. Pam is the proud owner of a battery powered diesel outline locomotive and took great delight in providing driving instructions to the NMRA members with everyone having a go at driving her locomotive. The controls consist of a hand held throttle just like in the smaller scales



Laurie Green taking John Beaton for a ride. With Pam nowhere in sight, it is a vote of confidence in Laurie's driving ability.

that they may need their eye sight tested because they had trouble identifying some of the cars.

The range of display items were extensive including:

- O scale tipple by Steve Cullen
- HO D³ locomotive by Peter MacDonald
- O scale figures by Laurie Green
- Trestle bents by Ian Mitaxa
- Mill and S scale figures by Paul Richie
- O scale plans of a small Shay and NT, NH, and NU rolling stock from the Ian Lindsay range in O scale assembled by Steve Holian.

Laurie Green brought the members up to date with the planning for the convention, which was then less than two weeks away. With all the hard work now complete it is just a matter of waiting for the day to arrive. ***

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Andrew Davenport receiving driving instructions from Pam Morecroft.

excellent dead pine trees. Graham's advice was that flower heads should be left to die on the plant before harvesting.

April Meeting

Our now annual trip to the BHP Western Port Railway Society took place during April. The Society has great facilities with permanent electric barbecues and club rooms. It has an extensive miniature five inch gauge railway and a large indoor HO layout. The visit was organised

but the main difference is that you travel with the train rather than just watching it go by. Also the train needs to be driven and allowances need to be made for the grades on the line or you could find yourself stalling on some sections of the line.

A great day was had by all and our thanks go to Ken and Pam and the members of the BHP Westernport Railway Society for allowing us to visit once again.

May Meeting

Unfortunately I was unable to make the May meeting as I was England for work. John Beaton was the host for this meeting and John has an extensive N scale layout. The day was designated as a running