THE FLIMSY

NMRA Division 2 Newsletter

October 2019

In this issue.

From the editor.

G'day,

Lots of typed bytes [black on white] this issue; so please take your time in reading as perusing the submitted pictures of the summary from John GILLIES on the 16th National N Scale Convention in Canberra.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words; where the hosted presentation on TRAMS by John BULLEN is the thousand words conversing the knowledge to the subject where at times humorous verbal tones.

Stephe JITTS remarked that he "wasn't inundated with offers for hosting meetings for 2020", however two members did indicate, but there are a few spaces to be filled.

The Hopkins/Bone award was explained as to its existence where Viv BRICE has been nominated.

The upcoming 2020 NMRA Convention PARRAMATTA NSW was discussed.

A short discussion on whether the members are interested in having a Club type building venture.

There was a comment from the floor that "Layout building is an art of Diplomacy"

John GILLIES written summary of on the 16th National N Scale Convention held in Canberra.

Stephen O'BRIEN, Rob NESBITT and John GILLIES all mentioned the 16th National N Scale Convention Canberra held at the Ibis Styles Hotel in Narrabundah on 10 - 13 October 2019. The Convention was run by N Scale Conventions Australia as an independent not-for-profit group affiliated with the NMRA AR with the organisation and running of the Convention largely undertaken by members of the Canberra Monaro N Scale Group, many of whom are also members of Division 2. They did a fabulous job.

The Convention Convenor was Div 2 member Stephen CURRY and he received able assistance from fellow Div 2 members Ross BALDERSON, Peter Dinham, Chandy Paul, Mal RISBY, Steve WALKER, Rob NESBITT and Stephen O'BRIEN with their activities ranging from displaying layouts, giving presentations, opening their layouts for the layout tour, providing tour transport, hosting an operating session, judging the modelling competition using NMRA judging rules and welcoming attendees at registration. 101 people attended the Convention and at least 20 were NMRA AR members.

All three commented on the excellent layouts, modelling and presentations given at the Convention and what a great time they had. Ross Balderson's "Newcastle 1899" layout was publicly displayed and operated for the first time and perfectly displayed Ross' scratch building craftsmanship and detail we've seen as over the last 7 years as he's given us progress snapshots at monthly meetings. Everything on the layout from his large incredibly detailed styrene buildings, locomotives, good wagons, passenger carriages (many featuring etched brass construction based on his own drawings), track work, ships and horse drawn wagons are scratch built. Ross advised he still has over two years work to complete the layout. Ross received the "People's Choice" popular vote award for his Newcastle layout at the Convention banquet on Saturday night. Congratulations on your well-deserved win Ross!

An innovative layout mentioned was Robbie Popovski's small "Gunbower" layout which models a small Victorian Railways station and surrounds. Tomix and Kato set track was carefully ballasted to improve its appearance and innovative use of 3D printing to produce the locomotive bodies, passenger and goods equipment, buildings, fencing, etc - everything on the layout except the trees and some small details were 3D printed.

Stephen Curry's "Hexhamish" layout is in the early stages of construction but is a great showcase for his excellent scratch building skills creating small steam locomotives and coal wagon bodies on modified Peco chassis. Stephen's models demonstrated great reliability as up to three continuously operating trains circulated around the small layout based on the Hexham area of the NSW Hunter Valley. Stephen also gave interesting presentations on chassis construction for beginners and cheap aids to modelling.

Other interesting presentations mentioned covered a wide range of topics from using Qubelok aluminium frame and folding legs for layout modules, cattle yards, compact and transportable layout construction, 3D modelling software, signalling for model railways, converting from DC to DCC by Peter Dinham and computer control of model railways by Chandy Paul who demonstrated this perfectly on his "Shin Canberra " Japanese layout during the layout tour. Ross BALDERSON delivered an informative and expanded version of his building styrene structures presentation while Steve Walker gave a well-received presentation on his weathering techniques. 14 of the 36 presentations delivered were by NMRA members. Mal RISBY also showed he's made considerable progress on his new layout on the layout tour.

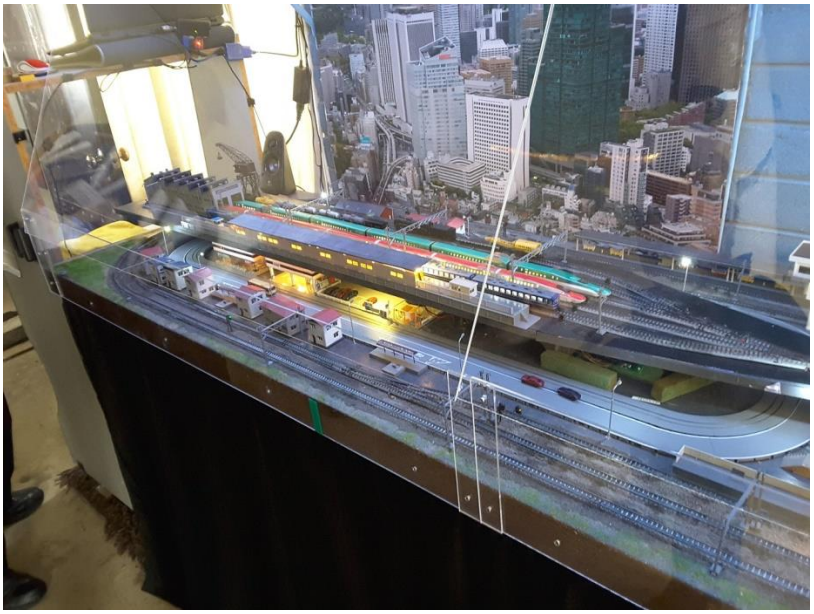
The Convention featured a good range of N Scale manufacturers, commercial traders and attendees selling second hand items. It was very well organised and run and everyone had a great time, even those Horribly Oversized modellers who attended to see what modern N Scale offers and how much it has improved in terms of detail, quality and reliability over the last 20 or more years. The modelling skills of many N Scale modellers are very high and with the wide range of activities offered; those attending recommend attending when the N Scale Convention is next held in Canberra. You won't be disappointed!

Ross BALDERSON setting up his massive “Newcastle 1899” layout featuring Ross’s scratch built structures, ships, point work, carriages, trams, horse drawn carriages, etc.

Kevin KNIGHT: “Ale Dock”, a 1:152 (2mm Scale) model inspired by a picture of a beer van being loaded at one of the many breweries at Burton-on-Trent

Robbie POPOVSKI: “Gunbower” featuring everything from the motive power, wagons, buildings and line side structures, was 3D drawn, printed and cast

J&A Brown loco #1, 1856 Hawthorn built 0-4-2; and J&A Brown loco #10 “Richmond Main”, 1911 Kitson built 2-8-2; both DCC scratch built by Stephen CURRY



Chandy PAUL: Shin Canberra layout featuring models of Japanese trains under computer control for scheduling and routing.

Old CANBERRA Stations by Canberra Monaro N scale Club member Pat GAGEL "The 1914 Station won the Bryan Dwyer Memorial Plate for "Best In Show" model."

Keep on training.

Robin.

October Meeting ….

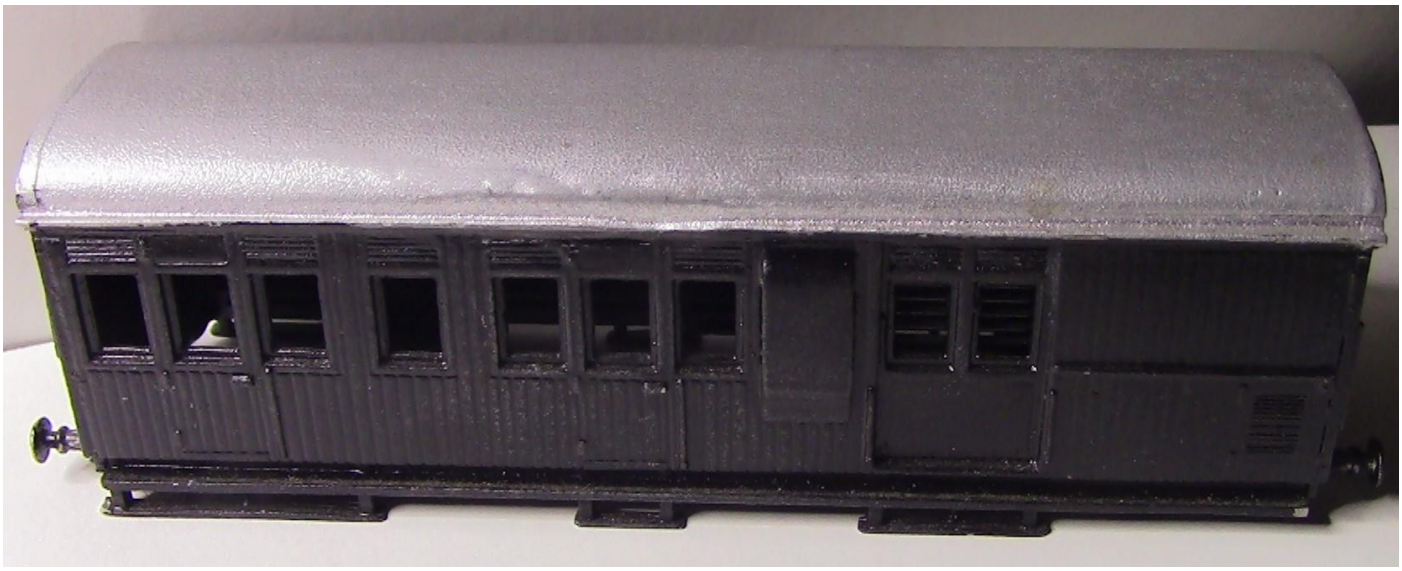
Show-n-tell.

Jess BRISBANE: A photograph & model of unique 1920's mobile home.

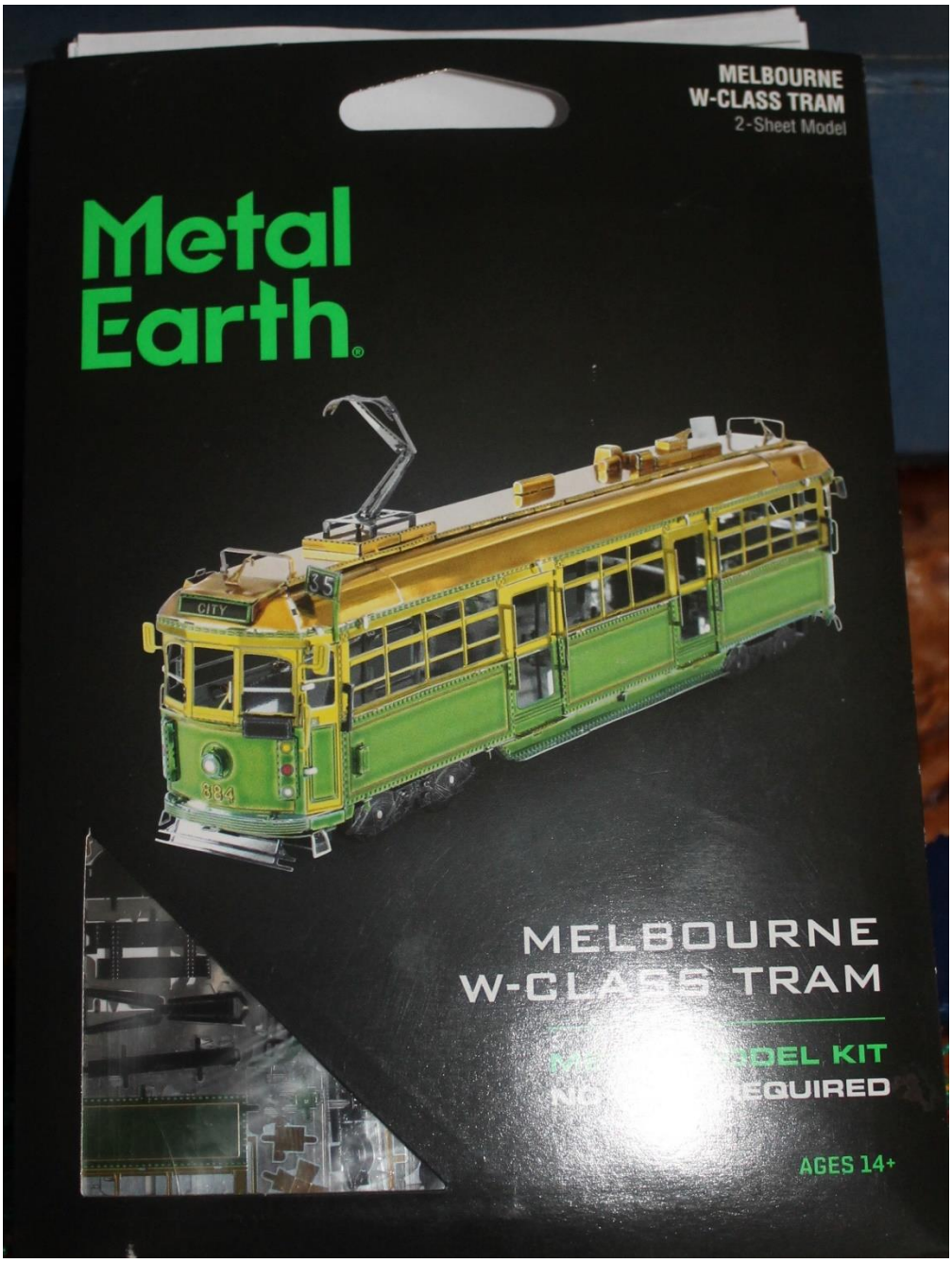
John MARTIN: Yet to be weathered, HO scale EVANS 5277 BOX SAULT STE MARIE BRIDGE Co. a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Central in the early 1990's acquired second hand EVANS box cars & painted them in the parent company's classy maroon scheme.

Top: RATIO made up KIT, bottom: DAPOL RTR

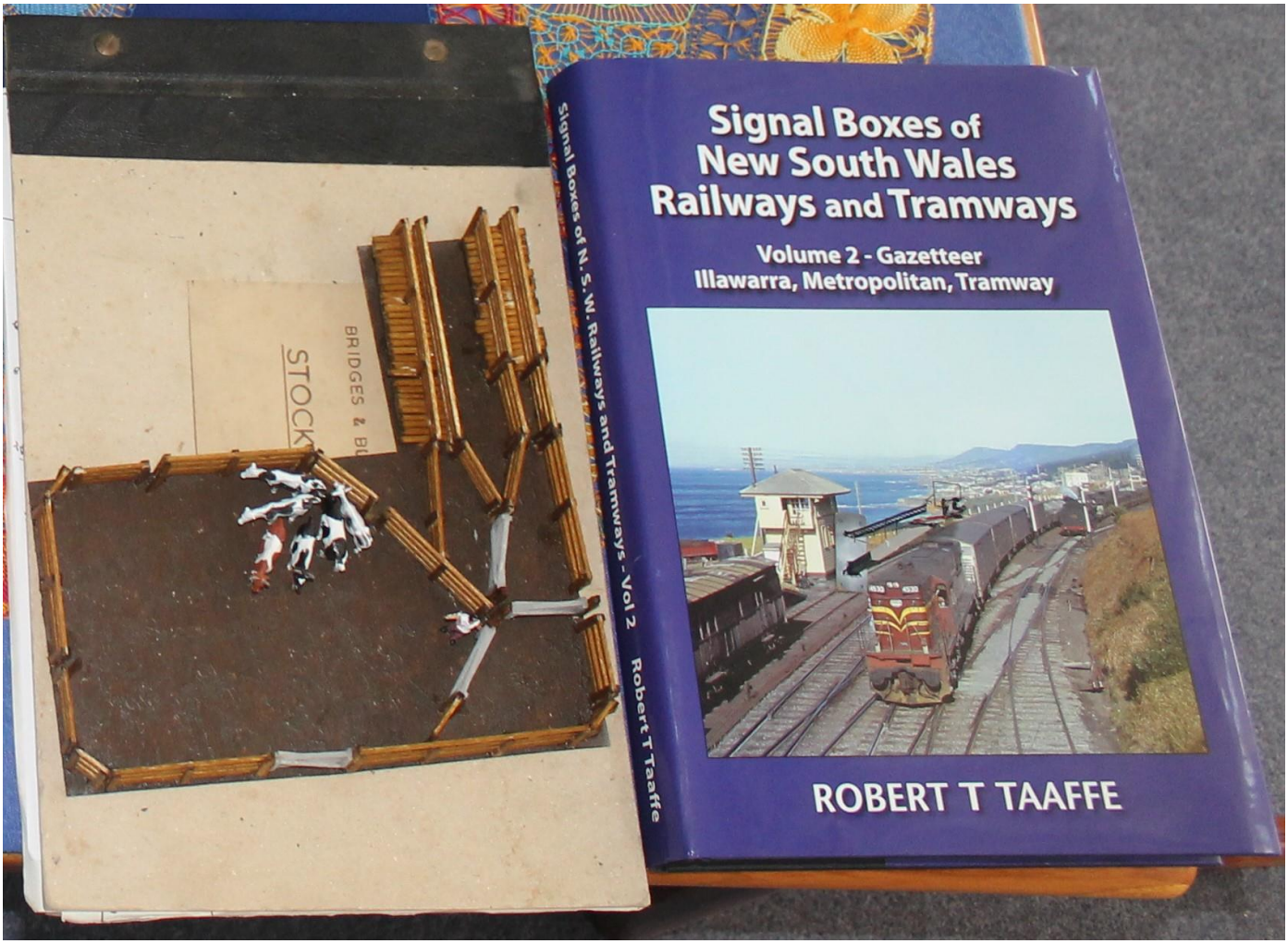
Robin FOSTER: The 1st Monday auction of the month on Trains Planes & Automobile [TPA] has at times items of interest for bids in this case the item was not clearly or correctly stated as the quality of the photograph but never the less worth a bid even without bogies & couplers having a small dent in the roof area. On arrival in a box (probably worth more than the model) was nicely assembled & painted. The item has been now identified as a Protype BHG / SHG.



Rob NESBITT: The Metal Earth kit of a W Class purchased eBay and a BERGS brass CPH in Tuscan & Russet win on TPA



Stephe JITTS: The signal $80.00. At a buy-n-sell publication Bridges, Building & Stockyard plans, showing a stockyard with the railings being stained with used sump oil ! The second edition of Signal boxes by Robert TAAFFE $110.00 (4 editions for the Signal Boxes are planned)



Hosted Presentation.

John BULLEN presentation**:** TRAMS

These things have been called **trams, trolleys, traction, *streetcars, Interurbans, trolley cars*** and ***light rail vehicles***.

Never mind what they are called – they **all** carry passengers on rails through suburban streets. For simplicity, they are all **TRAMS**.

They fall into two major categories. One category ran through the streets of cities and suburbs. A good example is Sydney's city and suburban tram service At its peak in the 1940s, it was one of the world's biggest and was twice the size of Melbourne's.

The second category of trams ran a service through rural regions, linking the cities and towns whose streets it also ran through. These were still called trams in the British Empire, but in USA they were ***Interurbans***. Generally they were an American phenomenon, and were bigger, heavier and faster than America's streetcars. The old service that still operates between Adelaide and Glenelg today would be called an interurban in USA.

Now – how did it all begin?

The old stage coach evolved into the horse bus. In the latter half of the 19th century, the horse tram steadily took over from the horse bus. Being on rails, the horse tram had greater carrying capacity than the horse bus for the same horsepower. First appearing in USA in 1830, the horse tram spread to Europe, Britain and on to the colonies. Sydney's horse trams which came in 1861 were short lived, but they were adopted elsewhere – even in the tiny town of Roebourne in the North West of Western Australia.

Other trams began. There were some interesting experiments with battery trams, gas trams, compressed air trams, and fireless steam trams, but all had serious disadvantages and none lasted long.

For example, the rich goldfield city of Bendigo started with battery trams in 1890. Inadequately tested, they simply couldn't cope with the hills along the route. The batteries were always running flat, so the fare-paying passengers then had to push their own tram uphill at a speed slower than they could walk themselves! Bendigo's battery trams were hastily abandoned after only thirteen weeks. Steam trams took over.

The world's successful tram experiments were **steam** trams, **cable** trams, and finally **electric** trams.

Steam trams began in USA in the 1860s, but never really became important there. By the 1880s steam trams were flourishing in Britain, Europe and Australia. Sydney had a big network on the south side as well as several smaller isolated systems. Sydney's steam trams were mostly electrified early in the 20th century, but steam trams still ran to Redbank Wharf on the Parramatta River as late as 1943. In Broken Hill, steam trams ran until 1926.

A few steam trams consisted of just one single vehicle, containing both the engine and a passenger compartment. More commonly though, there were two vehicles – an enclosed steam locomotive with a passenger trailer behind. Sometimes there were two trailers.

But the steam trams were doomed. Despite the engine being enclosed inside the housing, they were noisy, they belched smoke, they frightened horses, they upset dogs and they showered soot over laundry hung out to dry. Not really what you wanted in your own street.

Soon came the cable tram. The cable tramcar lowered a rod down through a narrow slot in the road midway between the two running rails. At the bottom end of the rod was a grip mechanism which gripped an endless cable which ran continuously in its own little tunnel beneath the road. The cable was driven by a steam engine in a winding house somewhere along the route. To go, the tram gripped the cable and travelled silently at the same speed as the cable. To stop, the grip-man released the cable and applied the mechanical brakes. The driving car which contained the driver and the grip mechanism was known as the **grip car** or **dummy**, and the passenger car behind was the **trailer**. Other cable trams had driver, grip mechanism and passengers all in one single car.

We all know about coupled electric trams and their simple reversal of direction at a terminus. The driver simply walked to the other end while the conductor changed the trolley pole or bow collector over. But this doesn't work for reversing a steam tram or a cable tram.
The power car **always** has to be at the front in the direction of travel.

Much skill was developed by drivers in switching the cars over on the move in minimum time as they approached the terminus. This involved slipping the coupling while the tram was still moving. The conductor would then gently touch the brake on the now freely running trailer. Meanwhile, somewhere between the two moving tramcars with passengers aboard, the points would be changed. Safe? Well, maybe.

Thanks to all the objections against steam locomotives in urban streets, and also due to the uncertainties of the new-fangled electricity until near the turn of the century, cable trams had an excellent opportunity to

become popular, and they seized it, especially in hilly cities.

Sydney had cable trams on the hilly Eastern Suburbs line running from Darling Harbour up through the city and out to Edgecliff. They also ran from Milson's Point up the hill to Crows Nest. All were replaced by electric trams at the turn of the century.

In Melbourne it was a different story, and their cable trams survived until 1940 despite the development of a very big electric network. I still have very clear memories of travelling by cable tram in Bourke Street and out in Fitzroy. The winding engine house in Nicholson St, Fitzroy, still exists today.

Despite Sydney's steam trams and Melbourne's cable trams lingering until the 1940s, nearly all steam trams and cable trams, worldwide, had been replaced by electric trams back at the beginning of the 20th century.

The earliest electric trams used many devices to collect the electric current but the three most common were bow collectors, trolley poles and pantographs. Pantographs are almost universal today.

Australia's very first electric tram ran from Box Hill to Doncaster in 1888. A privately owned line, it did not last long, but soon all major cities began to develop their own electric tram networks, Hobart being the first. Hobart trams still used bow collectors right to the very end in the 1950s, while all the others used trolley poles.

In the late 19th century, many tram systems incorporated conspicuous symbols in their destination signs, Sydney being a particularly good example. Not only was this important for those who could not read, but it helped everyone on wet evenings when the illuminated coloured symbol could be read from much farther away enabling you to judge when to step out into the weather.

In the 1980s and now with the world's biggest tram network, Melbourne converted to pantographs. All modern trams worldwide use pantographs, except for those drawing underground power or using batteries – yes, they're better now than what they had in 19th century Bendigo.

Tram services in the first half of the 20th century were well and truly dominated by the electric tram. This applied to Britain, America, Europe, and Australasia. Initially there was only the suburban tram or streetcar, well known in Sydney and Melbourne, but very soon came the bigger, heavier, faster and more comfortable interurban.

The interurban really only ever caught on in North America. Before World War One, USA and Canada were big countries with a relatively small amount of reasonable roads outside the main cities. This gave rail service a big advantage over road, and Interurbans were quick to exploit this. They reached their peak mileage of over 15,000 miles in 1916, with 3000 miles of track in Ohio alone.

The early 1920s saw the American interurban soar to new heights. The overall track mileage did not increase, but the quality of the vehicles themselves did. Fifty-ton giants were produced. They were really motorised railway coaches, but their appearance was distinctively different. Some had pantographs, but most still had trolley poles. Some were hideous, while others had very pleasing lines, especially the early models with bodies clad in varnished wooden slats, before the steel cars took over.

The decline of the interurban came after 1925 as roads improved and car sales increased enormously. Interurbans had mostly gone by the beginning of World War Two.

Some Interurbans still exist in Europe today, but they are regarded as normal railways there. A wonderful example is the Swiss-Italian 'Centovalli' line on a two hour run through glorious scenery in mountain country. And of course Adelaide's old Glenelg line still runs today, now equipped with modern trams and recently extended through the city.

During the interwar years, while the interurban faded away, the suburban tram or streetcar went from strength to strength. In 1929, 25 of the largest tramway companies in USA formed the Electric Railway Presidents' Conference Committee and set about designing the perfect tram. After five years they came up with the Presidents' Conference Committee tram design, which now became world famous as the PCC tram. It was an immediate success in USA where it was adopted by many tram networks. Most PCC cars

were single ended, requiring a balloon loop at each terminus to change direction, but some were double-ended with a cab at each end.

5000 PCC trams were built and operated in North America, but these are overshadowed by the 20,000 or so that ran in Eastern Europe after World War Two. Some of these are still in service.

The PCC cars were swift and comfortable, and became very popular. The aftermath of the Great Depression and the approach of World War Two stopped the PCC cars being adopted even more widely, especially outside North America. Sydney was going to buy some, but the war killed that. They did reach other countries however, including Britain. Melbourne adopted one PCC car in 1949, using a locally made body. It was used until 1971 and is preserved today. The only other PCC car in Australia is double ended, and is a museum import. It is a San Francisco car acquired by the Sydney Tram Museum, and is in running order.

Most tram networks around the world reached their peak of operation during World War Two. Wartime austerity curtailed the advance of road transport, and trams carried huge numbers of people. This applied especially in Australia.

No modern transport can approach the ability of Sydney's trams to clear an entire race crowd of 80,000 people after the last race at Randwick in about 20 minutes. An important factor in this was of course the use of the O and P Class "toast-rack" trams. Using 16 entry points along one side only, each coupled pair took only a few seconds to load to its full capacity of 160 seated passengers plus an extra 100 standing.

Waiting ready in rows along long platforms connected by overhead walkways, those trams moved colossal crowds unmatched by modern trains at the Sydney Olympics half a century later.

Trams contributed to community life in many ways. In 1947 Bingo was played every Friday night in Naremburn in Sydney, very handy to the Chatswood tramline. Bingo cards cost threepence each and sold prolifically. One night £30 was won by one very lucky man. This was a month and a half’s wages for a working man.

At the end of the evening he came forward to collect his winnings. He wore a shirt and trousers. His sagging trousers sat well below his enormous stomach, being held up solely by his straining braces which bit deeply into his flabby shoulders.

Distrustful of modern methods of payment, he refused to take a £30 cheque, insisting on cash. But all Bingo cards had been bought with threepences and sixpences and the house had no banknotes at all. However he was happy to accept payment in silver, having little idea of what was involved. He filled his trouser pockets to overflowing, then his shirt pockets. But more than half his fortune remained. So he poured this down inside his shirt and slowly staggered off towards the tram stop.

Everyone travelled by tram in those days, so he had quite a crowd to compete with when boarding the O Class crossbench tram for Willoughby. By the time he boarded, only standing room was left and he had to grab the overhead handrail for support.

Very soon the conductor reached in from the external footboard, *“Fares please”.*

Mr Newly Rich replied *“French’s Road, mate”*, thrusting his free hand into his trouser pocket. His overloaded braces parted and his trousers crashed noisily around his ankles. Small coins flew everywhere. This disaster released the huge treasure stowed inside his shirt. Overflowing the tram floor, coins cascaded out onto the footboard and down onto Willoughby Road.

You must appreciate that these trams did not have a smooth floor. The floor was of thin strips of wood about 1 cm wide and 1 cm high, with gaps about 1 cm between them. Thus coins could not be quickly swept up from the floor by the handful but had to be laboriously picked out of the gaps between the strips of wood.

Groping under the seats, Mr Newly Rich gathered what he could and, with both hands full of coins, did his best to haul his pants back up. He now had one hand holding coins and the grab rail, and the other hand holding more coins and his trousers.

The conductor again requested the fare. Attempting to comply, Mr Newly Rich lost his precarious grip on his trousers which once again crashed straight to the floor. Abandoning all pretence of modesty or dignity, he now scrambled to recover his rapidly diminishing wealth.

With patience running out, the conductor tapped him on his upturned bottom and said *"Look mate, I only want tuppence, not a bloody peep show!"*

The fare was eventually paid. Mr Not Quite So Rich duly got off at French's Road, considerably more lightly laden, leaving behind a compartment full of laughing and now wealthier passengers.

The 1950s saw the decline of the tram all over the world, as the challenge from road transport became too strong. Nearly all trams in America, Britain and Australasia had gone by the 1960s, though many networks in Europe have survived and are now thoroughly modern. Intriguing exceptions include Lisbon and Calcutta which still operate ancient tram fleets.

Melbourne is of course the notable exception at this end of the world, thanks to the vision and force of personality of one man – Major General Sir Robert Risson, Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board from 1949 to 1970. In Melbourne, the tram has triumphed over the car in the inner city where trams pass smoothly through a pedestrian mall prohibited to cars.

Sydney is now following a similar path with trams moving back into the city centre and road traffic being forced to retreat. Sydney trams were reintroduced in 1997 and have gone from strength to strength since then.

On the opening day, a young man turned up with an esky. He was told that the return trip to Wentworth Park would only take 45 minutes – not long enough to work up a thirst. *"No, no"* he said, *"Dad made us promise that if ever trams were to return to Sydney, he wanted a ride."* Opening the esky, out came the urn with his father's ashes.

But before that tram could run, the ancient scrubber car had to be brought out of the Sydney Tram Museum. Specially fitted with a pantograph, its job for a week was to grind the new track perfectly smooth for the new trams.

Trams are now undergoing resurgence, worldwide – especially in Europe. The most technologically advanced trams are possibly to be found in France.

Their modern design makes it impossible for certain experiences of the 1950s to be repeated. Bendigo and the adjacent town of Eaglehawk used to be connected by a single track tramway with occasional passing loops. Years 6 and 7 at Bendigo High School had their classrooms at California Gully along the line to Eaglehawk. At the end of the day, in one of those passing loops, their Bendigo bound tram would cross the outward tram from Bendigo carrying the Eaglehawk Catholics back from the Roman Catholic school in Bendigo.

Both groups would line their warriors up – littlies in front, tallest at the back – in the rear doorway of each tram. As they crossed in the passing loop, each squadron would enthusiastically release the ferocious spit they had been saving since boarding the tram. The Eaglehawk Roman Catholics were generally deemed the best spitters. 'Woe betide' any passenger innocently caught in the merciless crossfire.

Finally, a word on model trams…

They exist in the popular scales, both in ready to run and in kit form. American, European and Australian models are readily available in HO scale. Some are quite cheap, and others exist in brass.

In prototype practice, double trams have always been common around the world, and the modern articulated trams have three to five units joined together, but you never see the long trains common on railways. Thus trams offer no scope for shunting and making up trains.

On the other hand, trams and extremely tight curves (such as right angled street corners) go together. This makes for effective modelling in very limited space indeed.

Trams can handle steeper grades too, thanks to the tram having only to move itself, or at the very most, no more than one or two trailer cars.

A model tram layout accurately matching its prototype can be a very simple project to construct. But if you want realism, then you need overhead wiring and this is a technical challenge, especially if you'd like to model a Grand Union intersection with fully operating overhead catenary.

Grand Union is the title given to a four way street intersection where double tracks come into the intersection from all four streets, and where there are enough turnouts to allow any tram to turn into any of the three other streets leaving the intersection. The point work is complicated enough with 16 switchblades and then there are the best part of 100 frogs to consider. And that's just for the track, before you start thinking about the overhead wiring.

Perhaps fortunately, Grand Union junctions are not common in prototype practice. Australia's only example still exists in Caulfield at the corner of Balaclava and Hawthorn Roads. Auckland used to have two in the city centre and Sydney never had one at all. No-one ever built a Grand Union unless they really had to – a policy plenty good enough for all but the most serious modellers!

May I conclude by reading the dedication in this book…

"My mother had two aunts who were so fat that they each took up two seats on the tram. To the conductors who only charged them only one fare each, this book is dedicated."

The pictures below are of those model trams ranging from G scale, O scale and HO scale. They include trams from USA, England, Germany, Mallorca, Hong Kong, Adelaide, Sydney (old and modern) and Melbourne (old and modern). Trams displayed were mainly electric trams seen in cities and suburbs, but also on display were Interurbans, a cable tram, a steam tram a horse tram and a horse bus with a selection of books & publications.


Ubierring
Zoo-Garten-Tram


UNITED TRACTION CO.
SLR
SLR
2001

The last say.

Keep on training. Robin.

The next meeting will be on the 16th NOVEMBER 2019 being hosted by Ross BALDERSON 20 John Dwyer Crescent NSW starting time 1300 please RSVP to advise Ross of attendance.

Interested in hosting a meeting next year 2020 contact Stephe who will provide necessary information.

The FLIMSY contact robinfoster@iinet.net.au