

## Perth Model Railway Exhibition

AMRA WA Branch Annual Model Railway Exhibition - Perth Showgrounds 30 May - 1 June 2015



Aster Nickel Plate S-3 Berkshires and train on outer track with electric train on middle track

Perth has an active live steam fraternity who, as part of AMRA WA, have worked with the large scale electric members of to assemble a very impressive portable exhibition layout. The main outing for the layout is the annual Queens Birthday three day model railway exhibition at the Perth Showgrounds.

The layout has 3 operating tracks - the outer track is reserved for gauge 1 live steam operations, the middle track for electric and the inner dual gauge track for both electric and steam.

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As a trader at exhibitions and conventions I rarely get to play trains at these events, being busy manning the Argyle Trade Stand. Being aware of the prominence of the AMRA layout and wanting to catch up with the group, I contacted some of the members to see if I could join them for this event. After a welcoming invitation I prepared a collection of 32mm gauge live steamers and a couple of sets of rolling stock and sent them ahead via road freight. The package arrived safely and was waiting for me when I arrived. I joined the Perth guys on 'set up' day and was immediately made welcome. The 'O' gauge track was a recent edition to the layout and had not yet been tested. The guys had ingeniously added an extra rail to the existing inner track but a test of the circuit revealed that some extra work was required to make it fully serviceable.



*A nifty way to add 'O' gauge*

The live steam guys\* on the outer 45mm track were able to provide an almost seamless display of live steam operations for the full three days of the show with up to 3 locos in steam at any time. Amongst these were an Aster UP Challenger, NSW AD60 Garrett, a Duchess and a Black 5. All the locos hauled appropriate trains of significant length - a very impressive display

I was the only live steamer on the 'O' gauge track so ran my locos as often as I was able and when I couldn't, an electric model was pressed into service to keep the show going. I really enjoyed 'Double Heading' two models ahead of a long train. Keeping an even balance in their performance as well as keeping them both in steam was a challenge but very satisfying. I thought that the show put on by my little locos gave a good balance to the impressive performance given by the bigger



models on the outer gauge '1' track and an example of what fun these little steamers can be.

There is something about exhibiting for the public that is very exciting. A closed convention is a wonderful event for like-minded individuals to play trains, share experiences and catch up with friends but an exhibition is about putting on a show and providing entertainment. In addition to this, operating live steam models to a schedule requires concentration and attention to detail and duty as well as team work with other members of the group. It's not about individual operations but a team effort. You cannot simply set the model in operation and sit back to observe the crowd. One has to be both driver and fireman. The model needs to be serviced prior to the run and steam raised. When ready the cylinders need to be warmed and cleared of condensate and when underway the boiler needs constant attention.



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I'm writing this account of the weekend on the 3 ½ hour flight back to Melbourne as I lose 2 hours to arrive home close to midnight. My sincere thanks to the guys from the Perth AMRA Large Scale group for their hospitality and the fun I had in participating in this event. As always, my thanks to my wonderful wife for keeping home and business ticking over so I could totally lose myself for a few days in the fantasy and fun of running small steam locomotives amongst friends.

\* I use 'Guys' as a gender nonspecific grouping because there were both male and female operators

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