

**ST LUKE'S MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION:**

**A BRIEF HISTORY**

By Robert Evans

Written in 2011 to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Model Railway Exhibition



## **ORIGINS and INSPIRATIONS**

In the mid-1980s, St Luke's Sunday School was bursting at the seams with children. It had outgrown the recycled ex-Army Hall erected as the first church in 1951, but St Luke's church funds were scarce. Seeking an affordable option for more space for the Sunday School children, the Church Committee decided to acquire one of the then surplus railway carriages being sold off by the State Rail Authority. The carriage was purchased in 1986 and was eventually delivered by road on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1987.



At that time there was a number of active railway modellers within St Luke's congregation. These included Milton Brown, Robert Evans, Lukas Labutis, Rick Lovelock, Chris Manchip and his dad, Stan, James McMurtrie and Dick Price. Chris and Stan Manchip were active members of the Hornby Collectors' Club and were well connected with other modellers.



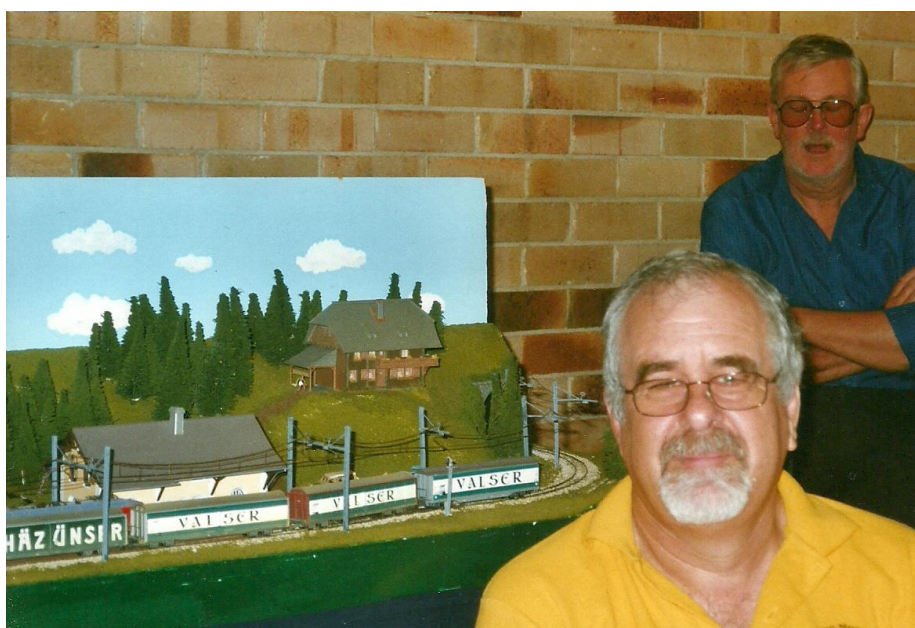
**Chris and Stan Manchip and their Hornby Dublo display in 1994**

Chris suggested that a Model Railway Exhibition be arranged at St Luke's to supplement the cost for the Sunday School's railway carriage. After checking dates to ensure that there were no clashes with similar events in Sydney, it was decided that the second or third weekend in November would be appropriate. The Church Committee endorsed this proposal and the first exhibition took place in November 1987.



**Robert Evans with “Carmarthen Junction Mk1” in 1987**

St Luke's local modellers showed their layouts but there was a mix of visiting layouts as well. Chris Manchip arranged to have one of the best layouts of its time exhibited - “A Beckett's Creek” - and this drew not only locals but modellers from far and wide to view the Exhibition. The formula of a mix of local and visiting layouts set a pattern which has been followed ever since. Some visitors have returned a number of times to share their displays, a notable one being Ian Williamson.



**Ian Williamson and his display in 2003**

## ANNUAL AWARDS

One feature of the exhibition has been the granting of awards to exhibitors, even though there is no formal competition. Initially, awards were given as encouragement to our many junior members. One such member was Scott Cunningham, whose progress can be seen in photographs of his layout taken in 1998 and 2002.



Following the death of Chris Manchip in 2002, an award for the “most entertaining layout”, to be chosen by the Rector, was instituted. After another founding member, Linsay Dousha, passed away in 2003, his widow, Judy, began donating a prize for the layout judged to have the best scenery – a skill that Linsay had perfected. Both of these awards are now presented during the special Church service on the Sunday of the exhibition.

## MILESTONES

### FORMATION OF ST LUKE’S MODEL RAILWAY CLUB

After a few years, a need was recognised to formalise a modellers’ group as there was a number of men and children in St Luke’s congregation who were interested in this hobby. The aim was to provide a wholesome and welcoming atmosphere in which modellers could share their skills with a particular emphasis on guiding and teaching junior modellers. Encouraged by the then Curate-in-Charge, Rev Grahame Defty, the St Luke’s Model Railway Club was formed around 1990. The inaugural president was the late Chris Manchip.

### CLUB CONSTITUTION

St Luke’s Railway Modellers’ Club is:

*“A Christian church based club for hobbyists and people interested in model railways. Our Club aims to: Provide support and fellowship to the members while guiding, teaching and sharing the interest and enthusiasm for model railways.”*

We comply with the Sydney Anglican Diocesan requirements for “child protection”.

Because the club is one of only a few Christian Model Railway Clubs in Greater Sydney, it attracts members both within and beyond the St Luke’s congregation. Most of the non-St

Luke's members belong to church congregations elsewhere. Two of the club members are serving in the Defence Forces. All the club's activities are self-funded, allowing members to build several HO/OO scale layouts as well as an N scale layout which is currently under construction.



**Jon Stanley and Ian Carlos with "Defty" under construction in the Church Hall during 2008**

Layouts owned by several members have been of such a high standard that they have been invited to display them at exhibitions in Beecroft, Forrestville, Warrimoo and Wollongong.

Other local organisations have regularly invited St Luke's Model Railway Club to exhibit layouts in support of their events. These have included fetes at Hornsby Heights School and Galston Pre-School, the Orange Blossom Festival Fair held by Kenthurst Rotary and Ignite the Flame Outreach held by the combined churches of St Ives.

### CHANGING FOCUS OF EXHIBITION

By the late 1990s, the annual St Luke's Model Railway Exhibition changed its focus from fund raising to outreach. A visitors' pack given to each family includes a gospel tract and the details of St Luke's church activities. On the back page of the Exhibition Programme there is a message from the minister. Over the last few years, an outreach table has been provided with Christian materials and parishioners are readily available to talk to visitors. Thousands of dollars have still been provided for Youth Ministries and food stalls continue to be held to raise funds for World Vision.

As it is a Parish event, many of the exhibits and all of the support activities are manned by St Luke's congregation members. Visitors have the opportunity to walk around the church and hall and to meet the minister and members of St Luke's.



**Julie Gates with Robyna and Sally Davies at the World Vision Cake Stall, 2010**

### SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICE

Invitations are given to all who visit the Exhibition on the Saturday to attend the 9.30am Exhibition Church Service on the Sunday morning. The service is followed by a special morning tea which welcomes visitors, exhibitors and parishioners.

### ACHIEVEMENTS OF EXHIBITION

The annual Model Railway Exhibition has become an event which is looked forward to by many families around Hornsby Heights. Feedback forms show that most of our visitors are local. Each year more than eight hundred people attend the Exhibition with about half of these being children. Only a small proportion of visitors comes from the dedicated modelling fraternity.

The Exhibition has developed into more than just a 'boys and their toys' event. It is a family event, incorporating such things as a jumping castle, face and plaster painting, local schools art competition and inexpensive refreshments. Over the years the "Fat Controller", ably played by Adrian Hallum, has proved to be a wonderful drawcard and at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, he will be making a return performance especially for the occasion, as he has moved out of the area.



**Adrian Hallum as the "Fat Controller" 2005**

Entry to the Exhibition is by a 'suggested' donation. This has been kept low to encourage attendance by family groups.

**VISION:**

The Club looks forward to many more exhibitions in support of St Luke's outreach to the community. Anyone interested, young and old, is invited to attend the Club's regular meetings in St Luke's church hall at 3pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays of most months.

<http://stlukeschurch.com.au>

[modelrail@stlukeschurch.com.au](mailto:modelrail@stlukeschurch.com.au)