

The first Queensland Industries Fair.

By Noel West



In the few years following the Second World War, life in general slowly returned to some semblance of what it was like before the conflict. Although there were shortages of some materials like steel and cement a lot of industrial enterprises were back in full production or expanding as well as new companies commencing business. Compared to 1945, by 1947 the number of factories had increased by 600 to 3,400 that employed over 73,000 workers. The purchase by the state government from

the federal government of the former munitions factories at Rocklea was a fillip for a number of new factories to commence production there.

In 1948 the Chamber of Manufactures approached the State Government with a proposal to stage a "fair" to showcase the buoyant manufacturing industry. On 12th May 1948 the Government approved the proposal with subsequent support from the Lord Mayor and the Royal National Association. In June it was stated that it would be held from 26th April 1949 for three weeks on 10 acres of the RNA grounds east of Gregory Terrace. Subsequent newspaper reports advised that over 100 firms had entered exhibits and the show would run until 14th May. Exhibitors were given six weeks to install their displays. There was a vast array of exhibitors but probably of most interest to readers of this article was the display of the latest steam locomotive and tram and bus. Along with some mock-up compartments for the proposed new all-steel, air-conditioned carriages the Railways Department had brought the second of their new class of DD17 tank engines, number 950, (Ipswich Workshops B/n 200). Resplendent in dark blue with red and silver trim it was mounted on a short length of track with the driving wheels raised clear of the rails. It was kept in steam and "driven slowly" for periods of time. Temporary steps were provided on either side of the cab so visitors could file through with some lucky ones allowed to blow the whistle.



The City Council staged displays for its various departments. The Department of Transport display featured the latest tram and diesel bus with a model tram running over a large figure eight layout. Despite the paper referring to it as a "tiny tram" the model was built to a scale of $\frac{3}{4}$ " to the foot, or 1/18 full size, in the tramway workshops. The real tram was FM car 497 which was to become the first "silent" tram in Australia with the introduction of resilient wheels. The

tram was to be raised five feet so visitors could view the "mechanism". The display was also

to include a large map of tram routes showing the number and position of trams in service in peak hour and tram tickets, destination signs and advertising matter would be printed. The bus number is unknown.

Located in the Museum's archives are several photographs of the Council's Department of Transport display. The images appear to be taken before the fair opened as one would suspect that further security would be placed around 497's truck display due to high voltages used. It seems that the man "driving" the motors from the exposed controller could be testing the display which features the truck, line breaker and contactors. Lights have been added to show which contactors are activated and the tram is also lit. A temporary 600 volt supply could have been provided from the Exhibition Loop line.

My personal experience with the fair commenced in my first year at school where I recall a poster was displayed advertising the QIF. My parents and I were among the many thousands who attended the event and I have a memory of climbing the steps into the cab of 950, feeling the heat from the firebox, and being raised by my father to become one of the lucky ones to sound the whistle, a wondrous thrill for a five year old. Following that the motion of the wheels and valve gear action was mesmerizing. I think that experience may have subliminally created my interest in steam trains. I recall too watching the model tram perform on its endless circuits of the layout. These memories must be some of the earliest I have considering I have no paraphernalia of the event to "remind" me.

Towards the end of the fair it was reported that the next fair would be held in about three year's time, possibly five years. Following the closure of the fair, a report on Tuesday 31st May stated that 497 will make its first official run on Thursday when it will carry members of the City Council's transport committee on the Chermside route. Immediately after that it will be placed on a regular schedule.



Subsequent Fairs

The following year in September a similar fair, the Central Queensland Industries Fair, was staged in Rockhampton. The Railway Department again provided a steam locomotive, being number 1009, the first one of the new Beyer Garratts then being delivered. For Brisbane though mention was made in the press during 1951 for plans for the second QIF to be held in 1952 at the same location, commencing again on the 26th April and

running until the 17th May. Prior to the event we learned that over 150 exhibitors would attend and the Railways Department would be displaying a Power Car for the new 'Lander trains. The Council was to spend £6037 on displays for its six departments but only the mention of a model of a proposed new road from the Customs House to Breakfast Creek Road could be found. An odd offering for entry was a one guinea "season ticket" that entitled a man and two women to admittance on any day of the fair. Perusing the contents of the Courier Mail's Fair Supplement reminds me that I probably attended the fair but nothing sticks in my mind like the impressions I got at the first QIF. The digitised copies of the Courier Mail currently finish in 1954 so I am

unable to search at home for any more fairs but I have a sense that there were no more. Can anyone help with that?

Since then

Many years later when I was at High School I became friends with a student whose father had worked at the tramway workshops and I learned that it was he who made the model tram featured on the 1949 layout. In the early years of the BTMS a display was held which included the large-scale model trams owned by the BCC. One of these of course is the same FM model however prior to the introduction of the Phoenix FMs it seems it was chosen to experiment with a colour scheme that the last eight cars were painted. It is satisfying to know that the tram model, along with a handful of its full sized brethren, is still in existence after all this time.



A Mystery

While it is over six decades since I attended the 1949 fair, and one's memory may not be as good as it once was I seem to recall that a model bus also appeared running around the perimeter of the tram layout and moving to the footpath at the various "stops". I am unable to say if the model was of a diesel bus or a trolley bus. Robert Thomson's memory is similar to mine and he also recalls a bus but not the type. However one of the Council's

models is a trolley bus to the same scale as the FM tram model. In one of the photos a large picture of a trolley bus can be seen in the display. The Courier Mail for Friday 17th June 1949 had the same photo described as an artist's impression of the new buses to be built to the design of the Transport Department officers. The image looks like an Australianised version of a USA trolley bus. So if the bus had already been designed it is possible that a model of it had been made also to appear on the layout. It is possible that there may have been a model of each type.

Unfortunately the photos don't show enough detail of the overhead but show wires for the tram but not for a trolley bus. If a trolley bus did run it could have pretended wires were there but its power and guidance mechanism are unknown. As there is no evidence of a "slot car" type of system I surmise it may have been towed around its circuit by means of magnetic attraction from a strong travelling magnet running along an under-road track. Is that plausible for those days? There were no radio-controlled models then. The cardboard vehicles on the layout would have been placed so that the bus avoided them. We would be pleased if anyone could assist in solving this enigma.

Information obtained from the National Library's digitised newspapers; various issues of the Courier Mail and "Locomotives in the Tropics" Volume 2 by John Armstrong (ARHS Qld 1994) with assistance from Robert Thomson.