

My Achievement Program Journey

Mick Moignard MMR® #693



D&RGW Spreader OU has parts from a Rio Grande Models kit, but much of the kit was replaced with more accurate scratchbuilt parts - photos by Mick Moignard MMR®

I had been aware of the NMRA Achievement Program and the MMR® title for many years, long before I joined the NMRA. I didn't have a layout at home, so I spent a lot of time building my Denver & Rio Grande Western and Rio Grande Southern locomotives and rolling stock in HO_{N3}, all the time dreaming of the layout to be able to run them on. There is one thing about not having a layout, though, and that is there is less pressure to complete something to see it running and that in some ways means that it was just fun building for the sheer enjoyment of seeing the model appear from the parts, and to have the time to do it slowly and carefully and do the best I could. Some of these models

were written up for *Continental Modeller* in the 1990s, and seeing them in print gave me quite a sense of achievement, even then.

We moved in 1993 to the house we're in now, which was chosen in part because there was an unusable integral garage which could be transformed, over time, into a railway room and workshop. Construction of the layout started in 2000, embracing DCC from the start. Sound started appearing in my locomotives not long after that, and then in 2005 there was a part-time diversion onto On30 with the Camp 93 layout built with a Risborough & District Model Railway Club friend. You may remember seeing this on the show circuit,

and if not, you can read about it in the next issue of *Roundhouse*. These DCC experiences led me to be asked to write a series of articles for *Scalefour News* around 2005 to 2007.

Contests and AP assessments are a way to get objective feedback on your modelling skills and ability

As well as writing articles for the modelling press, I was for a time the unpaid and honorary Technical Editor of *DominoPower*. This was a web magazine in the Lotus Notes arena. Between 2001 and 2013 I contributed around 100 articles to it. Writing how-to articles on software development is very similar to modelling articles; you need to be able to explain how you did something so that other people understand and can use your information themselves.

Writing was my first direct encounter with the AP. Steve Park suggested to me in 2007 that the articles I'd written for *Continental Modeller* and *Scalefour News* could be used as collateral for the Model Railroad Author certificate. I pondered that for a while, and then completed an SOQ (statement of quali-



D&RGW #452 is a reworked Westside K-27 model, extensively detailed to make the locomotive accurate as it would have appeared in 1951

fication) form and emailed it to him. He quickly responded with an acceptance, and shortly after that a certificate and a welcome letter from Paul Richardson MMR, then AP manager at National, arrived. I had started my MMR Journey!

I started entering some of the models I'd built over the years in the contests at conventions in Swindon, Kegworth, Bournemouth and other locations. Terry Wynne was then the Contest Chair. I picked up some merit awards for both locomotives and cars, and a couple of Best in Show awards. These locos were older brass locos from the 60s, and 70s which I'd significantly reworked and detailed. Brass locos made in that time period were usually generic models of the class, often bearing a sketchy resemblance to the prototype. It was fun to take these, strip them down to the bare boiler and build them back up as a model of a specific locomotive at a particular time in its life, and make them work properly and quietly. The cars I entered were mostly scratch-built, usually in styrene. That included a model of D&RGW caboose 0578 which gained 122 points at the Swindon show. As well as being largely scratchbuilt, it also features a complete interior as you can see from the photo. Steve again nudged me to submit OQ for cars using the Merit Awards gained in these contests in 2009. But while I had enough Merits for locos, none were scratch-built, so no Motive Power Certificate just yet.

When Terry Wynne retired as Contest Chair I took over. I'm not a great fan of contests as contests, but I am a fan of showing off what I've done and getting opinion and feedback from other modellers – a great way to learn more. Contests and AP assessments are a way to get objective feedback on your modelling skills and ability, but it does need someone to give up their time and energy to make that happen. I felt at the time that I could make such a contribution, which I did for four conventions. Running the contest room is just one of many ways of giving back to the hobby, writing articles is another. So is giving clinics, which is something I really do enjoy doing.

I started to think that aiming to complete my MMR was both achievable and something I wanted to achieve. I looked long and hard at the Engineering section, and realised that, as I had a



D&RGW Caboose #0578 is scratchbuilt in styrene with a complete interior including a coffee pot and some beans on the stove

reasonable sized layout which worked and worked well, I should be able to use what I'd done to complete both Civil and Engineering these two certificates are basically documentation of what you have done as you built the layout.

You do need to show for Civil that you can construct some items of track that work, and part of Electrical is about showing that you can wire them up and make them work. To be honest, my scenery award, in October 2021, using the scenery that had been built on the layout 10 and 15 years before, and constantly updated, tweaked and detailed since, was also fairly straightforward.

It's also worth stating here that you should read the regulations for each section carefully, and don't read into them things that aren't there. Just be sure you do and document what the regulations require. If you're in any doubt, just contact the region's AP team for clarification.

One more to go. Then I remembered that many years ago I'd scratchbuilt an RGS Fairmont speeder in HO_n3, from brass, and more recently had managed to get sound into it, using a Zimo MX648 decoder. So I filled out the paperwork for AP Assessment of it, and took it along to the Derby convention. Ever the optimist, I also filled out a

Motive Power SOQ, and the MMR SOQ, just in case I was successful with the speeder. 100 points later, I was!

Achieving MMR® status is clearly a milestone, and it's an end in itself, but it's not the end. I still plan to complete Structures, Prototype Modeller and Chief Dispatcher, in time. But there's an element that all this misses the real point. The point of the AP is the encouragement that you get from being able to say "I did that". For sure, documenting it all, particularly if you're doing it after the event - which happens to most of us - can be a bit tedious, but doing it is part of explaining to yourself as well as to other people that you can do it and that you have done it - and that sense of achievement and being proud of your own achievement is really what it is all about - and all the AP does is channel that. And the sense of achievement never ends.

Certificates gained:
Model Railroad Author
Master Builder - Cars
Association Volunteer
Model Railroad Engineer - Civil Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical Master Builder - Scenery
Master Builder - Motive Power

Mick Moignard MMR®