

## ANTIPODEAN ADVENTURE

Maxine and I had a fantastic two weeks in Queensland. We used the conventional Australian checklist, from "I-Spy Australia".

- Shark (small friendly 6 ft one) – tick!
- Snake (harmless 4 ft one) – tick!
- Crocodile (medium sized and also in burger) – tick!
- Kookaburra (lots including one almost on our balcony) – tick!
- Duck billed platypus (three of them) – tick!
- Kangaroos (and wallabies) – tick!
- Leeches (3 made unsuccessful attack on legs) – tick!
- Drongo (the bird species) – tick!
- Drongo (the Australians) – lots of ticks!
- Cassowary (father plus chick) – very, very, big tick!!!!

But we also saw a few trains. Our first day was spent on the metre gauge Karunda Railway, that is a portion of the line from Cairns to the interior, built when settlers were starving inland when the roads over the dividing range became impassable in the 'wet'. It's a two hour ride from Cairns to Karunda, and we travelled 'Gold' class, complete with snacks and drinks. The double-headed locos are modern diesels painted in aboriginal patterns, but the coaches come from the 1920's and 30's.

So here we are crossing an impressive viaduct on the curve:



And enjoying the hospitality:



Karunda is a charming station, with a well preserved building and semaphore signals. Here's the station throat with some 'super-power' in evidence.



We did also come across some 'real' trains. Here's a container train south of Cairns (again metre gauge).



And a high-speed tilting train entering Tully station. I'm not sure what speed it can get up to on the winding coastal main line (160km/hr I am told by the web), but I'm not sure I want to find out!



But the best trains of all were the sugar-cane lines. Around 2 foot gauge, these are laid out like a big train set around a sugar refining works, with loops here and there to load the cane, and random turnouts and branches following the field edges. Our first train, with about 50 trucks long, was crossing the road as we approached Mossman.



We then discovered the processing plant at Tully, with a constant movement of cane and empties – needed to maintain a flow of 700 tonnes/hour of cane for processing. Note how they are using 4-wheels trucks here, rather the larger bogie ones shown above.



Tully Sugar also have some larger diesel hydraulic Bo-Bo's. I only saw one at the back of the shed, but here's a picture from a web-site.



And finally, just to show that there are short cane trains around, we came across this one, with only a dozen trucks, running crossing the prosaically named 'Bruce Highway' on the way back to Cairns.



Of course, my thoughts turned to modelling potential! Not a great variety in stock, but very interesting tropical locations. For those interested, there are a number of web sites, both with cane railway photos, and a couple of modelling sites.