

# A Trip To Lithgow

I have written here a letter, which for want of something better, Have put it here for you, just ON SPEC, with apologies to 'Banjo'.

This is what I saw as the train wheels rolled 'round on a railroad ride to Lithgow.

On boarding the 3240, with it's shiny green plastic seats, it was a world away from home.

**I settled into No. 2 carriage against my better judgement, being mindful of the Glenbrook crash.**

With that disturbing thought in mind, (was this to be my last?) the train slid out of Central right on time.

And this is what I saw. Fair dinkum.



-A very large building at Stanmore promoting 'creative work places' for hire/sale (hmmmm).....  
-a few sleepy souls wandering empty streets in the brisk morning air, mobiles already a-clicking.....  
-a remarkably even pattern of irregular green fauna and rhomboidal red roofs.....

-at Croydon, a fascinating eagle-shaped cloud.....

**-a strangely melancholic but pleasurable sensation as the train 'closely shaves' the walls of tunnels.....**

-at Strathfield, ample evidence of the presence some life-form on apartment balconies, some presenting an even spread of domestic litter from one end to the other; not at all what the real estate brochures would show.....

-half a baker's dozen of people (one ankle-biter) join me in carriage no. 2; towards the front, a young couple sharing what looks like a slurpee breakfast; the bushie male half wears the regulation slouch hat, a scruffy beard, and a T-Shirt message: "All men are great in their dreams, reality just narrows the competition".....

-architectural interest along one of the many Railway Parades: a uniform row of boring boxy apartments rising up like a threatening wave from behind an equally uniform row of old-style street shops.....

-at Parramatta, another interesting contrast: a modern glassy, bright and clean rail station; just past the station, an overgrown tumble-down historical(?) graveyard....

-buildings begin to give way to the bush.

*-An interesting thing about long distance train travel is that after awhile people sit quite still for good lengths of time: ideal for sketching.*

-The young couple up front have finished their slurpee and are getting cosy.....

-at Mt Druitt the landscape is all 'low-rise' ;new-home estates contrast with farm land.....

-9.12am, first glimpses of the Blue Mountains over the tops of trees.....

-at Emu Plains, two very large rusting boats parked beside the rail line; perhaps waiting for the great flood.....

-beehives on one side of the tracks, a pipeworks on the other.....

-Glenbrook: **Glenbrook; so this is the danger area, completely devoid of evidence.....**

-9.25am, a most remarkable first view of the forested rocky outcrops; the train is upward bound but you can hardly feel it, just that now we are looking down more that up.....

-we are now straining to see the buildings for the trees.....

-out of Falconbridge, nothing to see but trees and tree tops.....

-vista: from here it is not the Blue Mountains, it is the Blue City far off in he distance.....

-Bullaburra: a man and a woman sitting in their driveway, presumably just watching the train and traffic go by.....

-Leura: first view of the Blue Mountains escarpments on one side and the Wentworth Falls Lake on the other.....

-a bird's-eye view across the Megalong valley to Katoomba.....

-the young couple at the front of the carriage have moved to the back, out of sight, where they proceed to an even cosier arrangement; this must be what train buffs mean when they refer to the romance of train travel.....

-out of Katoomba; on the right side one of the many creeks appear, surrounded by many charred trees; a legacy of the fires of 2005?.....

-the young man behind has a lad with him who trots around with a camera taking pictures of everything in sight; a young family also have a lad and they become friends, chatting to each other like banshees and bounding along the aisle, investigating as only the young can do.....

-Mount Victoria: very old hand painted sign declares we are 3,424 feet above sea level.....

-two lone cyclists on the Great Western Highway, about to do a hill-climb; I remember what it is like, having made my way over the Alps many years ago.....

-beautiful bush scenes suddenly appear as the train rushes onward; rock, bush enclaves, twisted trees.....

-wet rock walls, glistening like black opal; with striking patches of bright orange.....

-Zig-Zag rail depot; rail enthusiasts having a look around the old carriages beneath a very high rockwall topped with a row of gums.....

-on the left side, wire fencing over rock walls along the tracks; ahead, the Zig-Zag rail 'aqueduct' bridge.....

-more signs of past fire storms in the bush: charred trucks of trees, sporting fresh new growth.....

-abandoned church(?) ruins in the middle of a field outside Lithgow.....

-11.17am arrive Lithgow; surprisingly busy station with forty-three steps to the overhead walkway; atop, a small sign advising the steps may slippery during snow and ice.....

-today, there is no snow or ice, only a bit of rain and a hint of sun.....

-the showground is about 1km from the station, all downhill.....

-at the corner of Bell's Line of Road is a directional sign for Mines Rescue.

-IRONFEST: "Out of Respect to the Artists, Please No Photographs":  
wind gusts scatter some displays but the sun is out and I disappear into the crowds.....crowds of country folk; half from the Middle Ages, dressed in appropriate gear.....lunch time smells fill the air.....clanging of ironworks fill the ears.....surrounding hills fill the eyes.....bush music lifts the spirit, and gets the feet tapping too.....the art is in the Ballroom, with flutes, Medieval trinkets, caps, pottery, soaps, and the toilets.....on departing I make friends with Blackie, who was waiting for his Master, and kindly obliged to be photographed.



Departed Lithgow, but not before making a sketch image of the Marjorie Jackson (Lithgow Flash) statue in the small plaza opposite the train station.....

-on one side light streams down in shafts between the clouds, onto the valley vista below.....

-on the other side, dramatic escarpments and a light dappled peak in the distance.....

-grey and mellow-yellow sandstone out-croppings dot the rail-side bush.....

-a lonely lady jogger in blue singlet and cap on the path beside the rail line.....

-a man, in blue singlet and cap, is further along not running, leaning, against a car fender.....

-the quietness of the late afternoon bush is accentuated by the lack of brightness, evening colours are quickly taking over.....

-Medlow Baths: the Hydro Majestic looks packed out, hardly enough parking room for a Sedgeway.....

-petrol, next door is a surprisingly low \$1.18 per L.....

-out the train window, distant hills become shrouded in mist as the day comes to an end. A very pleasurable end. **And thankfully, not the last.**