

2019 JLN Southern award

Judges Report

The award is now a well-established part of LRRSA's activities. It is timely to remind members of the man, his legacy to the wider hobby, and his legacy to LRRSA.

John Louis Noel Southern (known as JLN Southern in bylines, and Jack to his friends) was born in 1914, and lived in East Kew (Melbourne, Vic.). While still a schoolboy, he developed a lifelong interest in railways, starting with VR and its locomotive engineering (helped by having work experience there during his university years). He graduated in metallurgical engineering from Melbourne University, and went to work with Electrolytic Zinc at Rosebery (Tas.). This broadened his interests to industrial railways. He became a proficient and prolific photographer. In 1938, he took a position with Australian Iron & Steel at Port Kembla (NSW), and remained there until retiring in 1975.

In the early 1960s, he was a regular contributor to ARHS 'Bulletin', mainly letters expanding on steam-loco articles written by others. His early contributions included articles on the Whitfield line, Tullah Tramway and Wogan Valley railway, plus some on steam locos. He continued his interest in industrial and mining railways, and authored many articles and books on the subject, particularly on those in the Illawarra region (NSW). Two such:

- * 'History of iron making in Australia'.

- * A 'Railway history of the Illawarra'.

He joined LRRSA shortly after its formation, and wrote occasional letters, expanding on articles by others. As his health deteriorated, he passed his collection of books and photographs to LRRSA, with the proceeds of sale to be applied to the establishment of an award for authors of industrial-railway history.

Council established the JLN Southern Award, with the following criteria:

Primary (1500 word minimum is essential):

- * Research is substantially original which makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge of light or industrial railways.

- * Material is well presented and appropriately referenced.

- * Work is of a high standard and readability and interest to the audience.

- * An examination, if relevant, of the broader context of where, when and why the railway operated.

Secondary:

- * The use of maps and diagrams.

- * The use of photographs and other illustrative material.

The Judges reported:

It is an honour to be selected as part of the judging panel of three, but it is also a big responsibility. Panellists have been selected to cover a diverse range of research, publishing and statistical skills: we complement each other. To be independent, we can't be article contributors ourselves. Way before

Covid19 hit our way of life, panellists have come together from different states and regions via email.

This year (published or completed in 2019) has been yet another good one for the quality of articles, the diverse range of topics, and the publishing standards of 'Light Railways'. All articles have been rewarded already by having the editor include them. All have offered valuable insights into light-railway history, and to wider Australian history. All have helped 'LR' stand high in the world of Australian history resources, bringing our hobby to a wider audience.

In the founding years of VLRRS, 'LR' was based on VR narrow gauge (timber and mining/industrial), plus horse and cable tramways. The scope widened with the 1968 change to LRRSA; 'LR' has grown to cover a diverse range of light-railway uses across Australia (and occasionally nearby islands): timber, sugar, mining plus many other industrial applications, plus the technology supporting them. Production and research standards have risen continuously. Along the way, many philosophies have become important: the railway serves an economic role, and was established to serve a purpose, and was operated in the context of an era, by people who were part of that era. Covering the industry and the era are just as important as the 'nuts & bolts'. The criteria for the award are based on those principles. We do read all articles, then narrow to a shortlist, then refine that to the award winner. That can often require several rounds of consultation, as the major articles are usually very close when rated.