

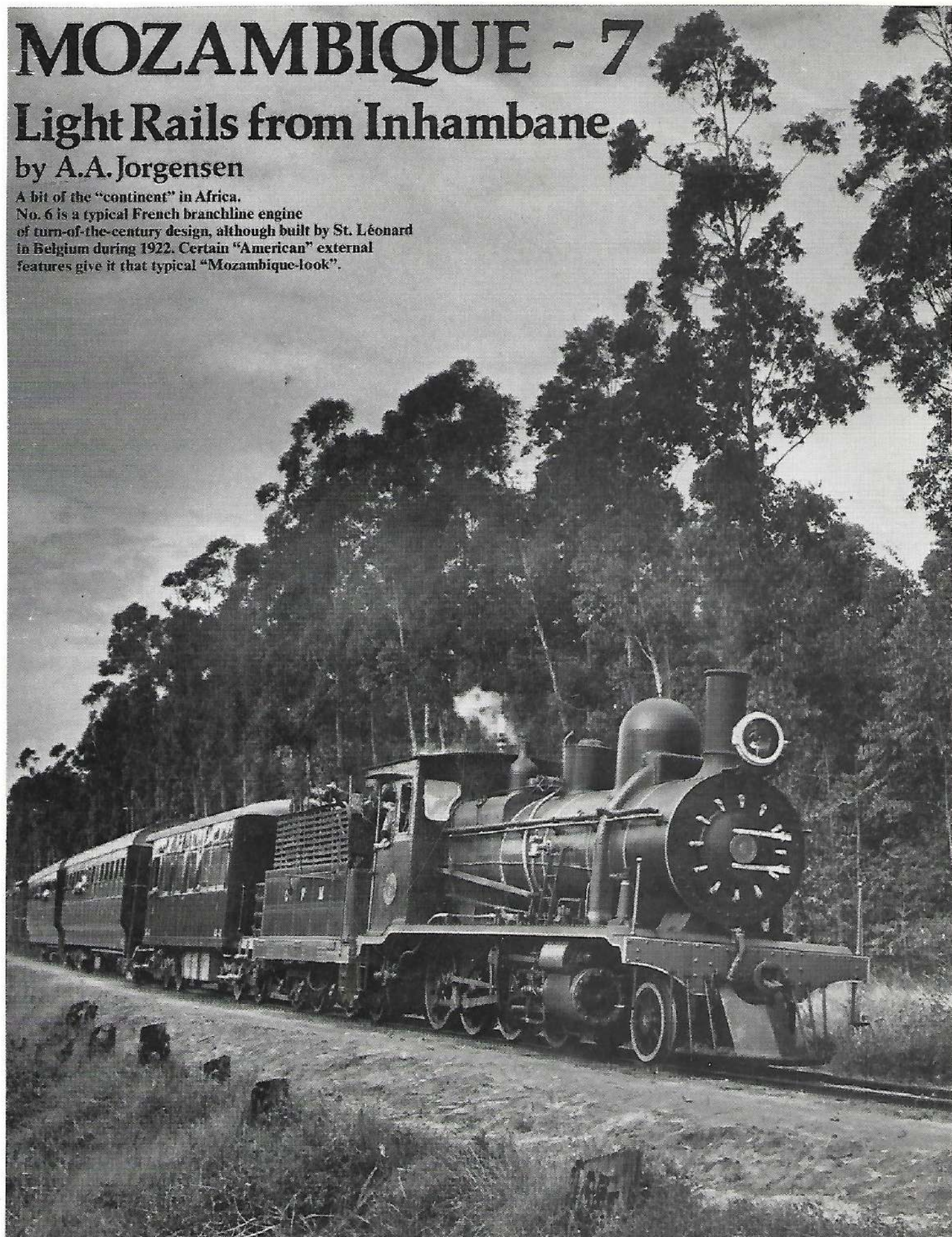
MOZAMBIQUE - 7

Light Rails from Inhambane

by A.A. Jorgensen

A bit of the "continent" in Africa.

No. 6 is a typical French branchline engine of turn-of-the-century design, although built by St. Léonard in Belgium during 1922. Certain "American" external features give it that typical "Mozambique-look".





A railway which is only 90 km in length, running from an obscure port to an even more obscure town to the south, and paralleled by a paved highway its entire length, is hardly a candidate for survival in the latter half of the twentieth century. Yet, the Inhambane-Inharrime line has managed to survive and at least, from last reports in 1975, was still very much alive.

Traffic on this railway, running slightly inland but parallel to the coast between Beira and Maputo (Lourenco Marques), appeared to be mostly passengers although the competing bus service, being faster, would seem to have snapped up much of the business. Yet, the trains we saw were nearly full! Perhaps if the service had been more frequent than four return trains per week the situation might have been different and it is possible, even likely, that the service had been more frequent in the past.

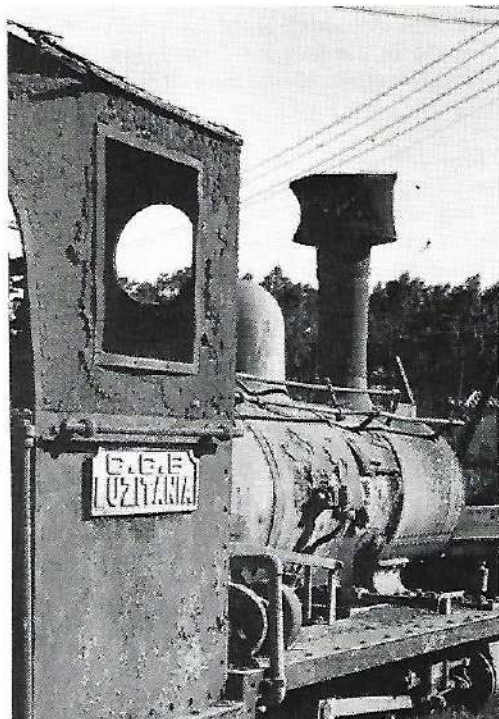
Inhambane was well known to South African vacationers on their way north to

Paradise Island near Vilanculos and the only port of consequence between Lourenco Marques and Beira. "Port" might seem an exaggeration but it was in fact, though handling a mere 8 648 tons of cargo in 1969 — compared with over 12,5 million metric tons for L.M. that same year, and over 216 197 tons for Quelemane, another tiny dot on the map of Mozambique. However, Inhambane was in a most lovely setting with the railway running down cobblestone streets to the harbour, although when we visited the town in 1969 the harbour line appeared seldom used. A pity, since a train struggling up the steep grade would have made a fine sight! The late Tony Spit, author of *Johannesburg Tramways*, and a well known railway enthusiast had a beautiful photo of a Z.A.S.M. "B" 0-6-4T hauling a train through the streets of Inhambane — a photograph which sadly has disappeared since his unfortunate death ten years ago.

The locomotives on the Inhambane line were a steam connoisseur's dream — three quaint Belgian-built 2-8-0's, a larger German 2-8-0 and a former Z.A.S.M. tank engine which, by 1969 had been retired in mid-overhaul. During the early 1970's this roster was supplemented by the arrival of a Porter 2-6-2 from Lourenco Marques, probably not in consequence to increased traffic but because of the slow rate of engine overhauls, due in part to the fact that boilers had to go to L.M. by sea for renewal — a time consuming process.

Just how long the Inhambane line will last is an open question — in fact its present state is unknown — but with the breakdown of general transport services in Mozambique and shortages of spares for internal-combustion engined road vehicles it is possible that the woodburning locos, using local fuel and not requiring sophisticated maintenance might just continue to creep along, even today.

Lonesome Lawleys

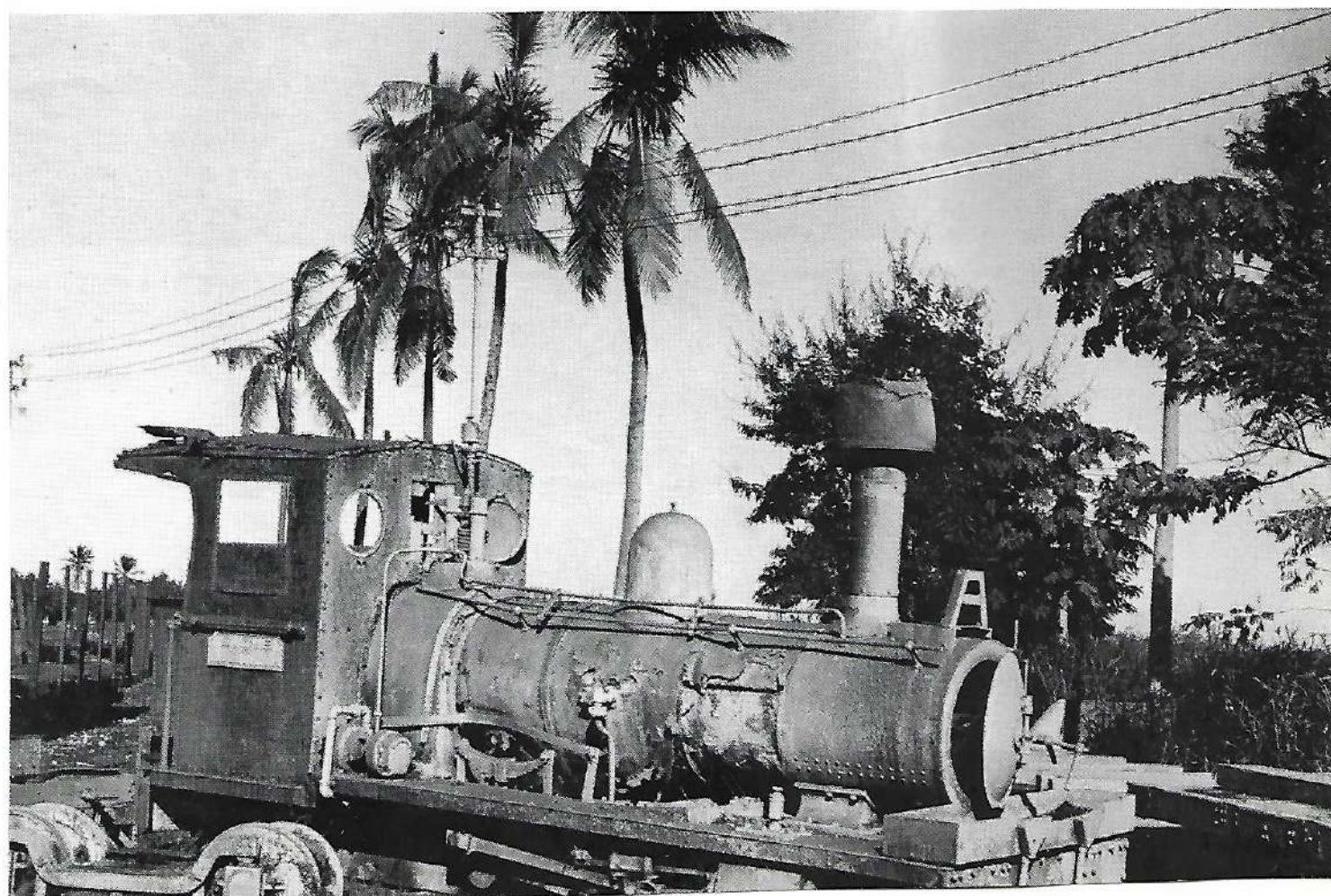


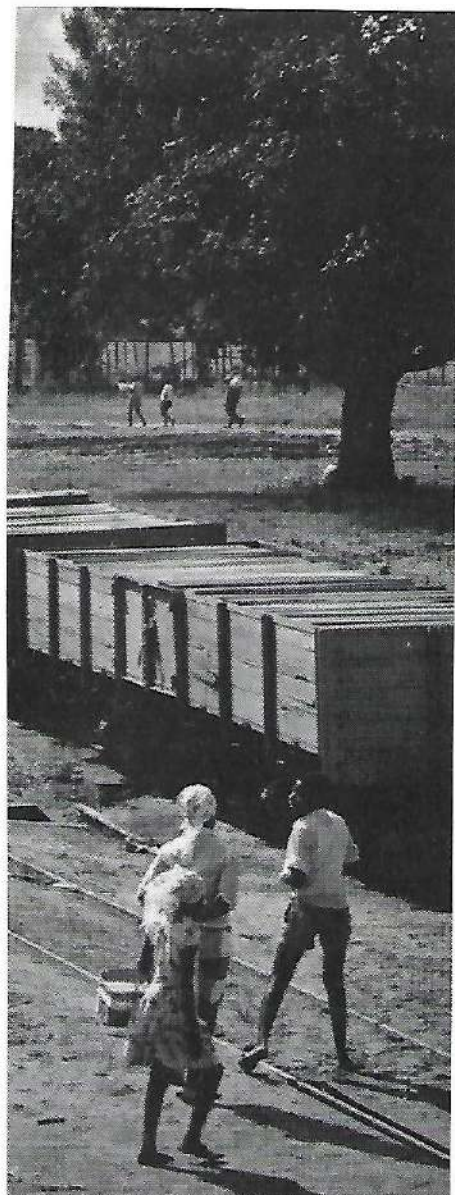
Across the bay formed by the Rio Pungwe as it exits into the Indian Ocean at Beira, is the small village of Nova Lusitania — itself situated on the north bank of the Rio Buzi. Although nearly within sight of Beira it was not an easy place to get to, the road into town being a rough track which in 1969 was part of the only direct route south to Lourenco Marques! Nova Lusitania had a special interest for us as it was the home of a sugar cane estate, Companhia do Buzi, which unfortunately ceased steam operation some years prior to our visit. But on the property were three priceless gems in the form of "Lawley" 4-4-0's. These two-foot gauge engines dated from the original Beira Railway, most having been built by the Falcon Engine works at Loughborough, England. The exact number of "Lawleys" built remains a mystery but in all likelihood exceeds 30 engines. After gauge-widening all the engines were left to rust away but soon buyers were at hand. The date that C.C.B. (Buzi) purchased their engines — indeed the actual number — is not known, but in 1915 Paulings sold 13 of the little engines to South African Railways, thus reversing the usual flow of secondhand engines between the two countries. The SAR engines were used in the Cape, Natal and the Transvaal, then scrapped or sold. Those fortunate enough to be sold saw much further service, from an East Rand gold

mine and Zebediela Estates in the Transvaal to Rhodesia where one went to the Pretoria Portland Cement Works at Salisbury, another to the Selukwe Peak Light Railway, and finally one to Zambesi Sawmills in what is now Zambia.

Four of these engines have been preserved — two in South Africa and two in Rhodesia — so it might not have seemed important that the three should have survived in Mozambique. But that was just the interest, as they were probably the last to operate, and of course, they never left the country, even the area where they first operated. Though we could have seen a perfectly preserved "Lawley" in Johannesburg, it was far more poignant to see these three derelict engines rusting away in the Mozambique bush.

A Falcon 4-4-0 with brass plate reading "C.C.B. Luzitania" sits forlorn and almost forgotten in our photos. The three intact Lawleys were all named, the others being "Lisboa" and "M'Dundo". The latter two were in better external condition and still on rails, indicating that they were probably the last to be used. A fourth tender indicated the possibility of another engine, already scrapped. Perhaps we will never know just how many Falcons the Buzi had — or how many others might have operated in industrial or agricultural service elsewhere in Mozambique.





Station stop at Jangamo, 34 km south of Inhambane (left). Average running time for mixed trains on the line was just over 4 hours — on a profile which could be described as almost dead-level, the only physical obstacles to railway construction being a few hillocks and small rivers flowing into the Indian Ocean.

Orenstien & Koppel built 2-8-0 No. 20 in 1930 (below), and she has operated on the Inhambane line ever since. The high pitched boiler, raised running plate and piston valve cylinders create the impression that she is larger than the St. Léonard 2-8-0's and though the cylinders are larger, resulting in a slightly increased tractive effort, her engine weight is almost identical.

In March 1975, Porter 2-6-2 No. 571 prepared to leave Inhambane on a crisp sunny morning in this photo by John Allerton (bottom). For such an unimportant railway, the Inhambane line has seen quite an international assortment of engines, the first being a former SAR Class 03 4-4-0 No. 0114, built by Dübs in 1890 for the Cape Government Railways and purchased by the Mozambique authorities in 1912. Of five recorded engine types known to have operated on the line, no less than six locomotive builders from five countries have been represented. Typical Mozambique!

