

# MOZAMBIQUE ~ 9

## Sena Sugar Estates

by A.A. Jorgensen



*Action at Marromeu! A former German Feldbahn 0-8-0T, built in 1918, meets an English Peckett 0-6-0ST, 31 years its junior. The Peckett, itself a small engine, looks huge in comparison with the Feldbahn — check the size of the men.*

Mozambique, with its great railway interest, offered something for everyone and with the tremendous variety of motive power on the C.F.M. it was easy to overlook the fact that "private" railways were few and far between. We were well aware in 1969 that most sugar tramways in South Africa were on their last legs and that Sena Sugar Estates in Mozambique operated one of the largest — if not the largest — cane railways on the sub-continent. With this in mind it was natural that we should be attracted to Marromeu on the lower Zambesi as we drove south from Quelemane towards Beira. Information from earlier visitors indicated an extensive 60 cm system on the south bank and a lengthy 3-foot gauge "mainline" connecting with the C.F.M. at Caia. This latter gauge was itself an indication that this was no ordinary industrial "pike", a fact borne out by its roster which consisted of 25 cane locomotives (60 cm gauge) and eleven 3'-0" gauge engines — all but one being steam.

The journey to Marromeu would under normal circumstances have been hair raising, but having already spent a week

travelling through Rhodesia, Malawi and northern Mozambique — over roads which in the latter country were appalling at best — we were conditioned to this aspect of "gricing" along the East African coast. Departure from Quelemane had been at 4 am, after a horrendous night in a date palm plantation infested with hungry carnivorous mosquitoes. The distance to the Zambesi ferry at Mopeia was only 240 km (145 miles) but along the way the road dived into flooded plains — often the only indication of its presence being the remains of overturned trucks which had strayed off the track into even deeper water! In one place Charlie Lewis skillfully manoeuvred his Kombi over a submerged bridge consisting of a rickety frame with parallel wood planks spaced to a truck's average "gauge" with nothing but brownish murky water of uncertain depth in between! Arrival at the Zambesi was about 9 am, but as luck would have it, the ferry was across the river and it only returned to collect us at 11 am. But the trip was well worth it. We quickly came upon the 3-foot line and followed this, paralleling the south bank of the Zambesi through thickly forested bush

which gave way to open plains at Marromeu where we reached our objective — narrow gauge sugar cane locomotives.

Sena Sugar Estates was an English owned company, based in London and run by a Portuguese-speaking local management employing local black labour for cane cutting, engine driving and other semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. There were two tramway operations, that at Marromeu and another on the north bank of the river at Luabo which was reported to be largely diesel and therefore not visited. Coal-burning paddle steamers connected the systems although during our short stay not one was to be seen. This was disappointing but what we saw on rails at Marromeu kept us very busy anyway!

In the space of three hours we saw 25 cane locomotives — 11 of which were in steam and operating whilst on the 3'-0" gauge nine steam and one diesel (under repair!) were seen. Apart from two Peckett shunters the only active 3-foot engine was out on the line and not seen which was a pity as this section was due to close in a short time because the C.F.M. had nearly completed a new 3'-6" line into Marromeu



from Inhamitanga on the former Trans-Zambesi Railway. Nevertheless, the variety of engines was more than enough to keep us entranced. Foremost amongst the 60 cm engines were ten "Feldbahn" 0-8-0Ts. These little engines were built for the German war effort between 1915 and 1918, originally forming motive power for the field supply railways and now were ending their days in the hot African bush — a far cry from the European battle theatre. Also on hand were seven Fowler engines, five Pecketts and three other odd engines. The 3'-0" produced its own impressive variety — no less than four designs and four builders being represented. It was amazing, but in the short time we were there the only engine which eluded our cameras and notebooks was the 3'-0" engine out on the line. A continual parade of cane engines, shunting and arriving from or departing to the fields provided non-stop entertainment.

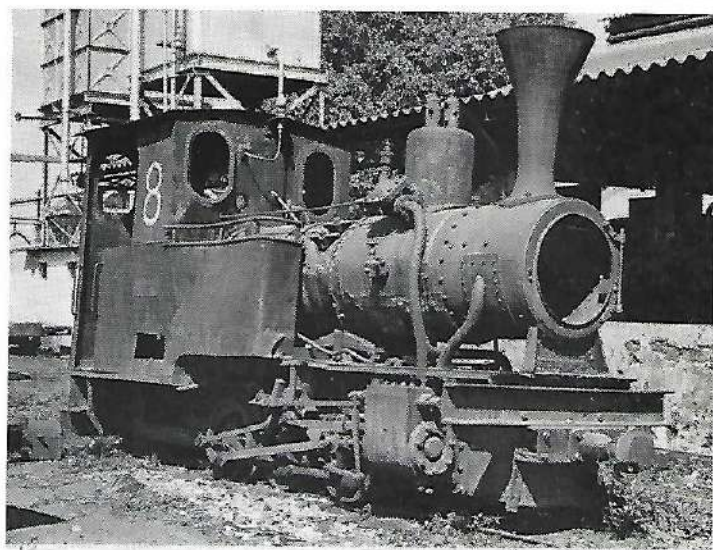
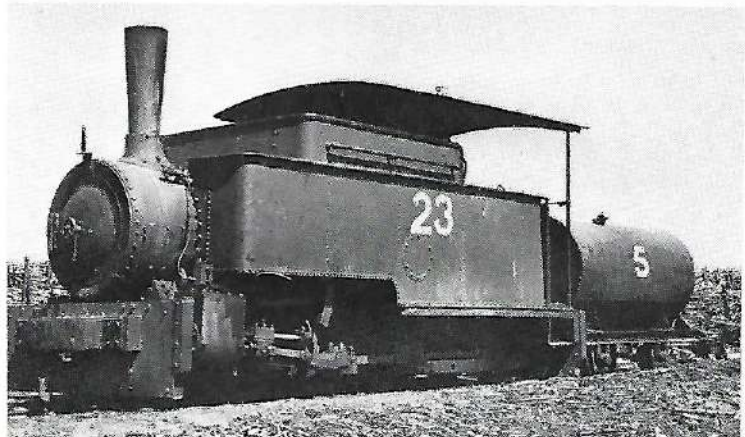
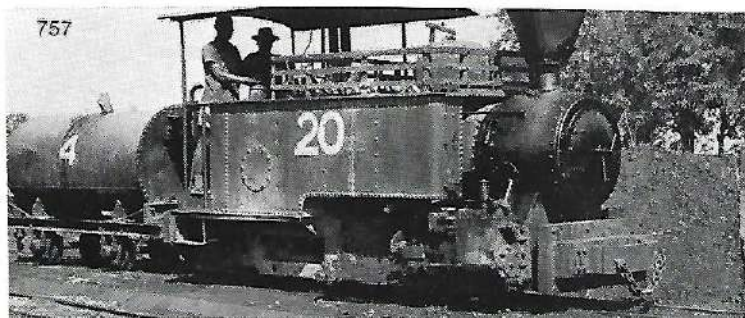
Sena's present state is not known for certain, except that a report in a Johannesburg newspaper earlier in the year stated that the Frelimo Government had accused the London company of economic sabotage as the entire operation had apparently come to a halt. It was reported that sugar cane had not been cut for three years and that the mill was out of operation. What probably happened is that Frelimo in its revolutionary fervour frightened off most

of the skilled staff, forcing the workers to undergo bush-type political indoctrination at the expense of actual physical work. In the circumstances it is not difficult to conclude what really happened and for us particularly sad, as a single visit to this fascinating railway should have been followed by another longer visit. Fortunately though, we were lucky indeed to have had one very successful day and our photographs and experience remain. \*

*Two Feldbahns provide action amid piles of cane (above). Most of these engines still carried their builders' plates although it could not be guaranteed that the correct plate was on the correct loco. An official 1969 Sena list recorded 14 Feldbahns between the two systems, 12 being Henschel products and two being Schwartzkopff.*

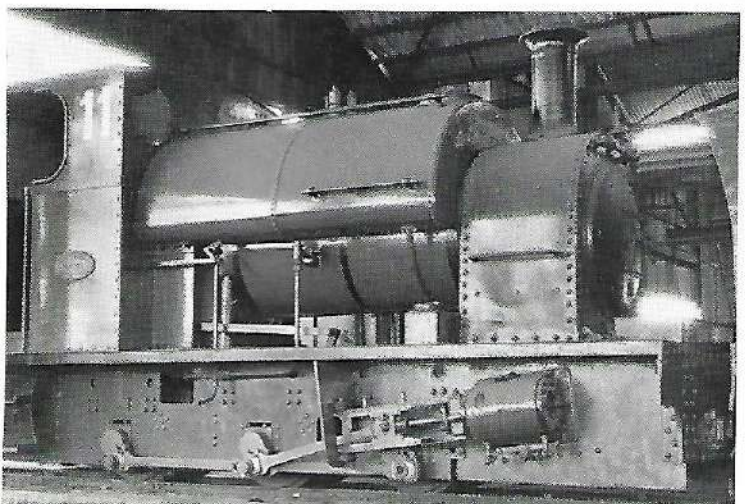
*Lazy Zambesi at Marromeu (left-middle). Sena's harbour might look primitive but then not many sugar cane railways could boast of one at all!*

*Kombi action on the road to the Zambesi ferry (left-lower). "Badger" Roberts and Chas Rickwood are not riding on the back for fun, but to provide extra weight for traction while Charlie struggles to keep forward momentum on an uncertain but very submerged surface!*



Seven Fowler engines graced the Sena 60 cm roster, No. 20 (left-top) being one of three 0-4-2Ts (Nos. 16, 20 and 21).

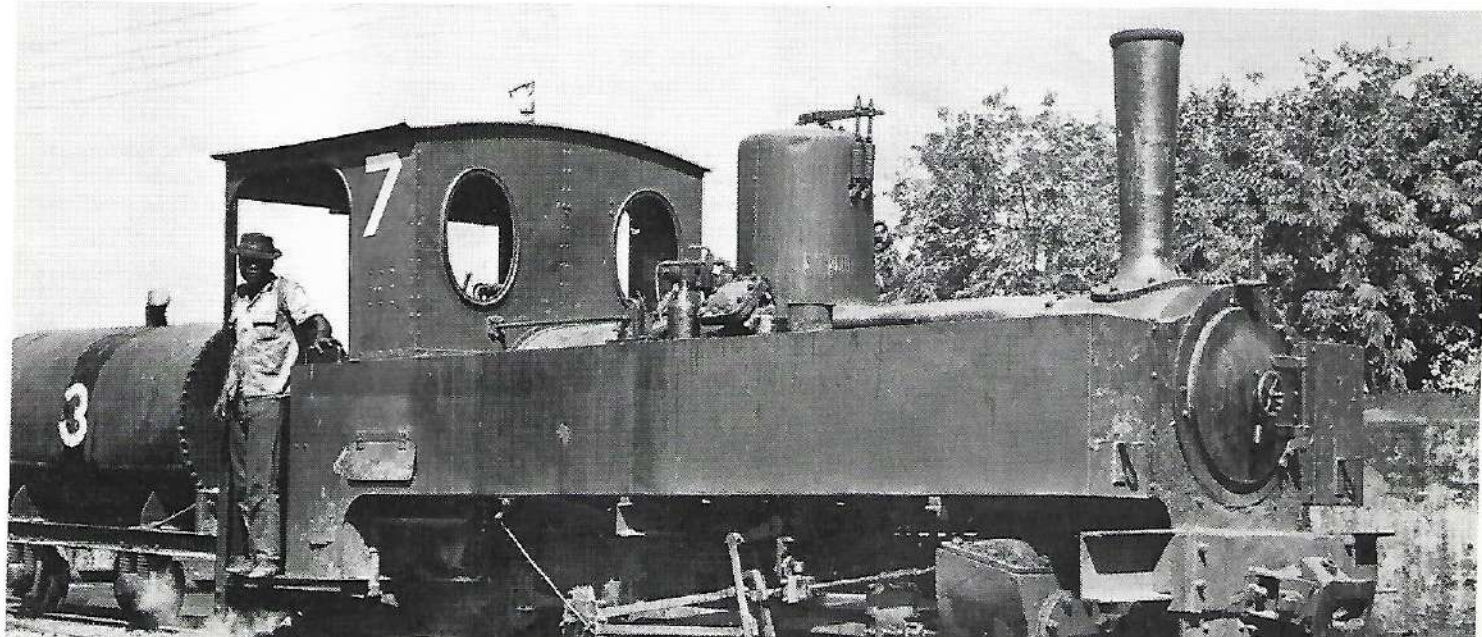
Larger Fowlers were 0-6-2Ts and not exactly graceful engines! Number 23 is pictured (middle-left) and for some unknown reason her two sisters were numbered 4 and 5. The final Fowler, No. 17 was an 0-6-0T and banked in the shed during our visit.

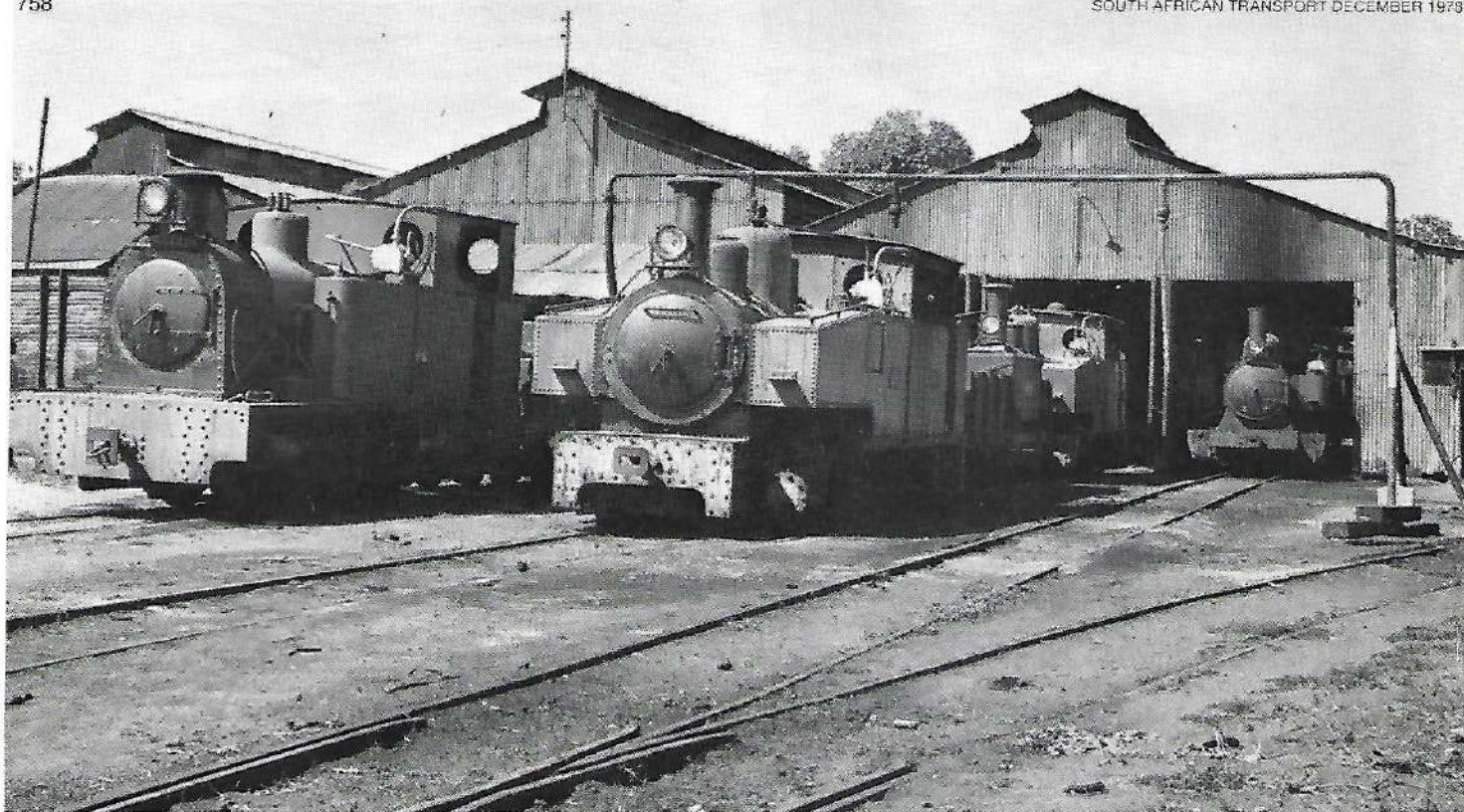


Only O & K engine on the Sena roster was 0-6-0T no. 8, built in 1927, and looking quite derelict at the time of our visit on July 19th, 1969 (above). Two other odd engines included No. 22, a Henschel 0-4-0T, and No. 25 — unidentified except as another Henschel. All we could find of this engine was its cab, upside-down in the shed!

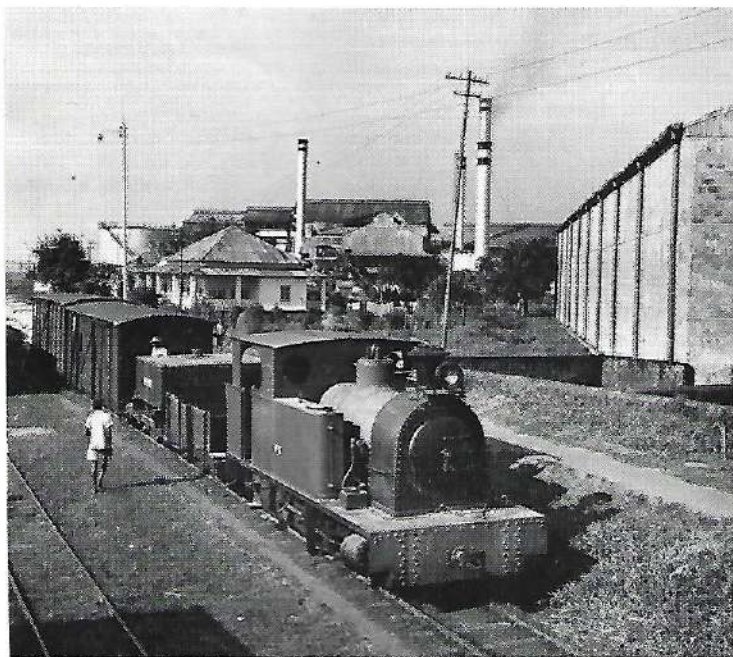
The five Pecketts were all saddle-tanks and "modern" — at least in age. First built in 1949 was No. 24, followed in 1953 by Nos. 11-13 and No. 14 in 1957. No. 11, seen in shed (left), is ex-works in a fresh coat of green paint with black boiler bands.

Most numerous engines on the Sena operation were the Feldbahns (below) and like other engines seen, they pulled supplementary water tanks — often bearing different numbers. For the conditions these engines were designed to meet, they had to be easily maintained — hence the outside Stephenson valve gear.





*Line-up of 3'-0" gauge locomotives (above). At the left is Peckett No. 6, whilst on the middle track are seen 2-6-4Ts 5 and 4, and at the right, nosing out of the shed, is No. 2, a Fowler 0-6-2T. The shed layout is most interesting — with 3'-0" engines occupying three stalls on one side, 60 cm engines three stalls on the other, and a machine shop in between.*



*Peckett No. 6 shunts between the mill and harbour. No. 6 was built in 1954 and sister No. 7 in 1958 — being the last steam engine constructed by Peckett and shipped from Bristol on June 12th 1958. It was reported that these two engines were converted to 3'-6" to shunt at the mill after the opening of the new C.F.M. line.*

*Two nearly identical 2-6-4Ts were the "big-boys" of the Sena operation. No. 5 (below-left) was built by Henschel in 1929 and sister No. 4 by Hudswell-Clarke in 1925. Three slightly smaller Fowler 0-6-2Ts, numbered 1-3, were also on the property, No. 1 being out on the line with a train.*

*She looks ancient — but not Roman, in spite of a plate bearing the number IV (below). There were four of these Fowler 0-6-0Ts, originally numbered I to IV, and we found three of them — all but this one being totally derelict.*

